

The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and
the Church

ESR

Walter Edwin Read

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by W.E. Read

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Printed in the USA

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Preface

In the chapters that follow under the general title of The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church no attempt is made to give a full and comprehensive coverage of the transcendent theme of God's revelation to mankind. Such a subject has so many aspects that it would be impossible in the limited space available to cover more than a few of the many phases of this theme.*BSPC 3.1*

This presentation confines itself to three of the ways God has chosen to make Himself known to men; namely, through the word of God, through the testimony of Jesus, and through the church of Christ.*BSPC 3.2*

In the Holy Scriptures we have Heaven's divine revelation that brings to men the knowledge of God and the sublime truths of salvation. In the testimony of Jesus we have the divine exhortation that directs our minds to the wonderful truths in the word of God. In the church of Christ we have the divine fellowship that God has designed should mean so much to us as the children of God in our communion with one another and in our fellowship with Him.*BSPC 3.3*

God's revelation through His word is emphasized thus:*BSPC 3.4*

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." *2 Timothy 3:16, 17.**BSPC 3.5*

"Search the Scriptures, for they are the voice of God speaking to the soul."—*Testimonies for the Church 8:157.**BSPC 3.6*

God's revelation through the testimony of Jesus is emphasized thus:*BSPC 3.7*

"The mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." *Ephesians 3:4, 5.**BSPC 3.8*

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” *Revelation 19:10.BSPC 3.9*

“God has spoken to us through His word, He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church.”—*Testimonies for the Church 8:298.BSPC 3.10*

God’s revelation through the church of Christ is emphasized thus:*BSPC 4.1*

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” *Ephesians 3:9, 10.BSPC 4.2*

“He purposed to give them [the nations] opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 286.BSPC 4.3*

“Through the church eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 50.BSPC 4.4*

It is the earnest hope of the author that a careful and prayerful perusal of the pages that follow may confirm our confidence in the eternal word of God, that it may give us a deeper appreciation of the rich blessings provided for us in the Spirit of prophecy, and that it may lead us also to enjoy to a fuller degree the wonderful joys of fellowship in the church of Christ here below, in preparation for the infinite fullness of benedictions in the everlasting kingdom of our God.*BSPC 4.5*

Part One

Chapter 1—The Holy Scriptures

The Bible, the name by which the word of God is commonly known, constitutes God's revelation to the hearts of men. Through it divine illumination comes to minds darkened by sin. In its pages man is permitted to behold the wondrous glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus our Lord. As he ponders the sacred messages of the word of God he will find that:*BSPC 4.6*

"In every page, whether history, or precept, or prophecy, the Old Testament Scriptures are irradiated with the glory of the Son of God. So far as it was of divine institution, the entire system of Judaism was a compacted prophecy of the gospel. To Christ 'give all the prophets witness.' From the promise given to Adam, down through the patriarchal line and the legal economy, heaven's glorious light made plain the footsteps of the Redeemer. Seers beheld the Star of Bethlehem, the Shiloh to come, as future things swept before them in mysterious procession. In every sacrifice, Christ's death was shown. In every cloud of incense His righteousness ascended. By every jubilee trumpet His name was sounded. In the awful mystery of the holy of holies His glory dwelt."—*The Desire of Ages, 211, 212.BSPC 4.7*

Names by Which the Scriptures Are Known

In the Divine Record various terms are used to designate the word of the Most High. It is called the Scripture or Scriptures at least sixty eight times, seventeen in the Old Testament and fifty one in the New.*BSPC 5.1*

The word scriptures means “writings,” and so when we study the collection of divine messages, we are meditating upon the “divine writings”—letters from the Most High to the children of men. We might think of the Bible as a book in which God expresses His deep love for mankind. It certainly reveals His matchless love and compassion, especially in the gift of His only-begotten Son. Consequently it becomes God’s love letter to the human race, perhaps one of the longest love letters ever written. Here God speaks to the sons of men in language of endearing affection. He not only loved but “so loved” (*John 3:16*) that He gave us His eternal Son, and He assures us over and over again that He loves us even though we have been sinful and disobedient.*BSPC 5.2*

Observe such expressions as the following:*BSPC 6.1*

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” *Jeremiah 31:3*.*BSPC 6.2*

“He loved them unto the end.” *John 13:1*.*BSPC 6.3*

“God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” *Romans 5:8*.*BSPC 6.4*

The divine revelation is known also as the “oracles of God.” We read in *Romans 3:2* of the “oracles of God” and in *Acts 7:38* of “the lively oracles.” This revelation from Heaven is called also the “word of God.” This term is used in both the Old and the New Testament, and it comes to us in varying associations. For instance, in addition to the expression “word of God,” this divine revelation is called “the word of the Lord” (*Psalms 18:30*), and “the word of the Holy One of Israel” (*Isaiah 5:24*).*BSPC 6.5*

Furthermore, when the prophets describe the divine communication through them, they speak of it as “the word of the Lord came unto

me, saying.” There are many variants of this expression, as will be seen in the following:*BSPC 6.6*

“Thus says the Lord.” *2 Samuel 7:8*. “As God hath said.” *2 Corinthians 6:16*. “God spoke.” *Genesis 8:15*. “The Holy Ghost says.” *Hebrews 3:7*. “I the Lord have said.” *Ezekiel 21:17*. “The Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spoke.” *Acts 1:16*. “The scripture says.” *James 4:5*.*BSPC 6.7*

The word Bible is the term most frequently employed when referring to the Sacred Scriptures, but this is not a Biblical word. It comes from the Greek *biblia*, which means “books.”*BSPC 6.8*

The Holy Bible—the Book—is a sacred collection of many books. However, the Bible is a complete whole, and so this is a correct term. It is referred to as “the book” in the Scripture itself. “In the volume of the book it is written of me.” *Psalms 40:7; Hebrews 10:7*.*BSPC 6.9*

Even though it is a book, thank God, it is the Book of books, and this has been well expressed, in the following lines:*BSPC 6.10*

“Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 129.*BSPC 7.1*

Symbols Illustrating the Word of God

In order to make the truth plain to the hearts and minds of men, God has chosen to use various figures, or symbols, by which to bring home more forcefully the truths He seeks to reveal to human hearts.*BSPC 7.2*

The word of God is likened to:*BSPC 7.3*

Bread	<i>John 6:48, 58</i>	Milk	<i>1 Peter 2:2</i>
Chain	<i>Early Writings, 221</i>	Mine	<i>Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 476</i>
Fire	<i>Jeremiah 20:9</i>	Mirror	<i>James 1:23, 25</i>
Fountain	<i>Fundamentals of Christian Education, 393</i>	Pearls	<i>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 456</i>
Gold	<i>Psalms 19:10</i>	Rock	<i>Mount of Blessing, pp. 213, 216</i>
Hammer	<i>Jeremiah 23:29</i>	Seed	<i>The Desire of Ages, 192</i>
Honey	<i>Psalms 119:103</i>	Silver	<i>Psalms 12:6</i>
Lamp	<i>Psalms 119:105</i>	Sword	<i>Ephesians 6:17</i>
Leaven	<i>Christ's Object Lessons, 99</i>	Water	<i>Ephesians 5:26</i>
Light	<i>Christ's Object Lessons, 111, 406</i>		
Meat	<i>Hebrews 5:12, 14</i>		

The Word of God Is Eternal

The servants of God all through the ages have testified to the eternal nature of the word of God.*BSPC 7.4*

Everything in this world of sin is temporary; the things of time and sense are ephemeral. The things with which we have to do day by day will pass away, but the word of our God remains; this is eternal. Even the heavens and the earth may be dissolved, but “my words shall not pass away.” *Matthew 24:35*. Centuries ago the gospel prophet of the Old Testament declared: “The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” *Isaiah 40:8*.*BSPC 7.5*

It is no wonder that millenniums ago the sweet singer of Israel penned these striking words: “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” *Psalms 119:89*. This is a wonderful thought. The word of God is safe and secure from every foe. No man, no evil angel, no enemy of the truth of God, whether it be an individual, a nation, or an ecclesiastical council, can ever tamper with it; it is in heaven; it is guarded by the stalwarts of the angelic hosts. There they encamp round about the throne of God, and His word is safe from all molestation. Some translations of this text instead of the word settled give endures, established, or stands firm. Truly the word of the Lord “endures forever.” God’s “word is as enduring as the everlasting hills.” (*The Great Controversy*, 66.)*BSPC 7.6*

“The Lord Gave the Word”

It should be observed that when the time came for the message of warning and entreaty to be given, God sent His messengers with the life-giving words from heaven. This is reiterated over and over again in the Sacred Record.*BSPC 8.1*

“The Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets!”
Jeremiah 25:4.BSPC 8.2

“The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending.” *2 Chronicles 36:15.BSPC 8.3*

“Many years did thou forbear them, and testified against them by thy spirit in thy prophets!” *Nehemiah 9:30.BSPC 8.4*

The testimony through the prophet Zechariah is the same, for he writes concerning “the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets!” *Zechariah 7:12*. Hence the word of God, the Holy Bible, the Scriptures of truth, constitutes a blessed gift from God to the human race. Here is the message of eternal love, the voice of entreaty, the plea to return to the Father’s house and find hope and joy in accepting the rich offer of divine mercy and salvation.*BSPC 8.5*

The Spoken and the Written Word of God

Not only was the divine word spoken by the prophets of old, it was also written. In this way the Heaven-sent revelations were preserved for succeeding generations.*BSPC 8.6*

We read in the Scripture of truth that the divine oracles were:*BSPC 8.7*

“Spoken. by Daniel the prophet!” *Matthew 24:15*. “Spoken of the Lord by the prophet!” *Matthew 1:22*. “Spoken... by the prophet Esaias!” *Matthew 3:1*. “Spoken by Jeremy the prophet!” *Matthew 27:9*.

“Spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets!” *Luke 1:70*.*BSPC 8.8*

We read also that they were written:*BSPC 8.9*

“Things which are written may be fulfilled!” *Luke 21:22*.*BSPC 8.10*

“Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.” *John 1:45*. “It is written in the book of Psalms.” *Acts 1:20*. “That the scriptures [writings] of the prophets might be fulfilled.” *Matthew 26:56*.*BSPC 9.1*

Concerning that which was written we do well to understand its value and its sacred character, for:*BSPC 9.2*

“The writing was the writing of God.” *Exodus 32:16*. “There came a writing...from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says the Lord.”² *Chronicles 21:12*. “Said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me.” *1 Chronicles 28:19*.*BSPC 9.3*

The emphasis upon the written as well as the spoken word of God is seen also in the way the apostle Paul uses the Old Testament Scriptures. Twice he uses the word “describes” in the book of Romans as under:*BSPC 9.4*

“Moses describes the righteousness.” *Romans 10:5*.

“David ... describes the blessedness.” *Romans 4:6*.*BSPC 9.5*

It is the same word in English, but there are two different words

used in the Greek New Testament. In *Romans 10:5* the word is grapho, “to write”; in *Romans 4:6* it is lego, “to say, to tell.” *BSPC 9.6*

So whether the divine revelation is spoken or written it is equally the word of the everlasting God. *BSPC 9.7*

Dr. George T. Purves writes: *BSPC 9.8*

“Not only did Moses and the prophets speak from God, but the sacred Scriptures themselves were in some way composed under divine control. He not only affirms with Peter that, ‘moved by the Holy Ghost men spoke from God,’ but that ‘the Scriptures themselves are inspired by God.’ Paul plainly recognizes the human authorship of the books, and quotes Moses and David and Isaiah as speaking therein. But not only through them, but in these books of theirs did God also speak. Many readers notice the first part of Paul’s statement, but not the second. God spoke ‘through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.’”—*The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, January, 1893, p. 13. *BSPC 9.9*

We read also: *BSPC 9.10*

“The book is thus rightly said to be inspired no less than the prophet. The book reflects and perpetuates the personal characteristics of the prophet, but it does not create them. Writing introduces no limitation into the representation of truth which does not already exist in the first conception and expression of it.”—Brooke Foss Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (Boston, 1862), p. 15. *BSPC 9.11*

What Is Included in the Word of God?

Let us consider the word as it applies to the written Scriptures of divine revelation. It seems quite evident from the Holy Scriptures themselves that the books of the Old Testament were recognized as “holy scriptures.” This is expressed not only by the apostles but by the Savior Himself. Paul in his counsel to Timothy makes reference to the fact—*BSPC 10.1*

“that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” *2 Timothy 3:15.BSPC 10.2*

This reference to the Scriptures referred at that time only to the writings of the Old Testament, for the books of the New Testament were not then compiled. The same testimony is borne by Peter when he declared that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” *2 Peter 1:20*. Here again it is evident that reference is made to the Old Testament writings. Furthermore, we find the Master Himself, when talking to the disciples on that memorable journey to Emmaus, pointing them to the Old Testament Scriptures to show that He was the Christ of God, the promised Messiah. Note carefully His words:*BSPC 10.3*

“Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” *Luke 24:27, 44.BSPC 10.4*

It will be observed that in *verse 27* the Savior calls attention to “Moses and all the prophets”; but in *verse 44* He refers to the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. Here reference is made to the three parts of the Hebrew writings, or Holy Scriptures. These were arranged in three sections, the Pentateuch, comprising the five books of Moses; the prophets, which included the major and minor prophets of ancient days; and the Hagiographa—the holy writings, which embraced not only the collection of 150 psalms but also such books as Proverbs and others. In the Savior’s words to

the astonished disciples during: that eventful walk, Jesus not only endorsed the revelation of God through His servants the prophets but also gave clear endorsement for calling these revelations by the term “scriptures.” *BSPC 10.5*

The New Testament writings, also coming through the prophets of the early church, came to be recognized as divine revelations from God to man. This conviction developed very early in the history of the apostolic church; it came in part during the lifetime of the apostles themselves. This was evidently so in the case of the letters of the apostle Paul, for Peter, one of his colleagues, declared on one occasion: *BSPC 11.1*

“Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things. In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” 2 *Peter 3:15, 16. BSPC 11.2*

These texts reveal that Peter—and he undoubtedly represents other of the apostles and many believers of that day—recognized not only the Old Testament writings but also the epistles of the apostle Paul as “scriptures.” So far as the apostle to the Gentiles is concerned, this can be seen also in his words in *1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37*; and the apostle Peter also recognized that his words as well as those of the other members of the apostolic band had divine authority. (*1 Peter 1:12.*) Hence, the conviction concerning the writings of the apostles, at least those that were chosen to be part of the New Testament as “scriptures of truth,” was formed quite early, in fact, while the apostles were still active in their ministry for God. *BSPC 11.3*

Some of the earliest writings extant, outside the Bible, that give the history of the church after the days of the apostles, were known as the writings of the early church fathers. Although we would not quote these church fathers to any extent in matters of faith and doctrine, it is clear from their writings that they recognized the New Testament gospels as well as the epistles and the book of Revelation as “Holy Writings” or “Holy Scriptures.” *BSPC 11.4*

From an excellent authority we quote:*BSPC 11.5*

“The ... testimonies of the apostolic fathers, we may remark, without any professed intention to ascertain the canon of the New Testament, they ‘have most effectually ascertained it, by their quotations from the several books which it contains, or by their explicit references to them, as the authentic Scriptures received and relied on as inspired oracles, by the whole Christian church.... There is scarcely a book of the New Testament, which one or other of the apostolical fathers has not either quoted or referred to.... They uniformly quote and allude to them, with the respect and reverence due to inspired writings: and they describe them as “Scriptures,” as “Sacred Scriptures,” and as “the Oracles of the Lord.” There is indeed good reason to conclude, not only from the multiplicity of references, but from the language employed by the apostolical fathers in making their quotations, that the books of the New Testament were not only generally received, and in common use in the Christian churches, but that at least the greater part of them had been collected and circulated in one volume before the end of the first, or in the very beginning of the second century.”— Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (1839), vol. 1, pp. 81, 82.*BSPC 11.6*

Note also the following:*BSPC 12.1*

“In the letters written by Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, as he journeyed to his martyrdom in Rome in AD. 115, there are pretty certain quotations from Matthew, John, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and possible allusions to Mark, Luke, Acts, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Hebrews, and 1 Peter. His younger contemporary Polycarp in a letter to the Philippians quotes from the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 1 John. And so we might go on through the writers of the second century, amassing increasing evidence of their familiarity with and recognition of the authority of the New Testament writings. So far as the Apostolic Fathers are concerned, the evidence is collected and weighed in a work called *The New*

Testament in the Apostolic Fathers, recording the findings of a committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology in 1905.”—
F.F. Bruce, *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?* pp. 18,
19.*BSPC 12.2*

Relation of Old Testament to Words of Jesus

There was an intimate relationship between the Old Testament writings and the words of Christ Jesus our Lord. He puts His words on the same basis and as of equal authority and value with the words of divine revelation through the prophets of old, as will be seen in such passages as the following:*BSPC 12.3*

“Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” *John 5:39.BSPC 12.4*

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?” *Verses 45-47.BSPC 12.5*

In *1 Timothy 5:18* Paul, referring to the Scripture, quotes, “The laborer is worthy of his reward.” But where is this scripture? Evidently not in the Old Testament. But it is in the New and in the words of the Master as recorded in *Matthew 10:10*, where it reads, “The workman is worthy of his meat.”*BSPC 13.1*

In the light of these references we conclude that not only God’s revelation through His prophets of old constituted the “holy Scriptures,” but also the words of Christ Jesus our Lord, the teachings and counsels of His apostles, and the records we find in the Gospels, the epistles, and the Apocalypse, are all worthy of a place in “the volume of the book,” and are to be recognized and accepted as sacred writings—God’s message to the hearts of men today.*BSPC 13.2*

We must remember also that the two Testaments, the Old and the New, are interwoven; they cannot be separated. One cannot be understood without the other. Each Testament is a lexicon—a glossary, a commentary—for the other. It has been well said:*BSPC 13.3*

The New is the gospel unfolded—the Old is the gospel enfolded. The New is the gospel unveiled—the Old is the gospel veiled. The New is in the Old concealed—the Old is by the New revealed. The

New is in the Old contained—the Old is by the New explained. The Old is the gospel confined—the New is the gospel defined. The Old is the gospel enclosed—the New is the gospel disclosed.*BSPC 13.4*

In the Spirit of prophecy we read:*BSPC 13.5*

“The word of God includes the Scriptures of the Old Testament as well as of the New. One is not complete without the other.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 126.BSPC 13.6*

“In rejecting the Old, they [those who set aside the Old Testament] virtually reject the New; for both are parts of an inseparable whole.... The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 128.BSPC 13.7*

The Source of the Divine Writings

The use of the possessive in the expression “word of God” indicates very clearly the source of the oracles of God. If it is His word, it comes from God. It emanates from Him; He speaks the word; it proceeds from His thought and is uttered by Him. We read of “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” *Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4.BSPC 13.8*

The Testimony of the Prophets Themselves

All through the ages the prophets of the Most High have unhesitatingly declared that the word they gave to the people of their day came from the Lord. We will observe some of the expressions they used to convey this thought to men:*BSPC 14.1*

“Says the Lord”: *Jeremiah 8:1; Amos 2:11; Nahum 2:13; Zephaniah 3:8; Jonah 4:10.BSPC 14.2*

“The Lord says”: *Micah 6:1.BSPC 14.3*

“The Lord answered me, and said”: *Habakkuk 2:2.BSPC 14.4*

“Thus says the Lord”: *Obadiah 1:1; 2 Samuel 7:8; Joshua 7:13; Jeremiah 13:1; Zechariah 11:4.BSPC 14.5*

“The word of the Lord that came”: *Hosea 1:2; Joel 1:1.BSPC 14.6*

“The word of the Lord ... came unto me, saying”: *Ezekiel 12:1.BSPC 14.7*

“The word that came ... from the Lord, saying”: *Jeremiah 30:1.BSPC 14.8*

“The Lord said unto me”: *Isaiah 8:1.BSPC 14.9*

“His word”: *2 Chronicles 10:15; Lamentations 2:17.BSPC 14.10*

“What hath the Lord spoken?” *Numbers 23:17.BSPC 14.11*

“The word of God”: *1 Samuel 9:27.BSPC 14.12*

“The scripture of truth”: *Daniel 10:21.BSPC 14.13*

The testimony of the New Testament writers to the messages of ancient days:*BSPC 14.14*

Of Genesis	“God spoke.”	<i>Acts 7:6; Genesis 15:13-16</i>
Of Exodus	“The Holy Ghost this signifying.”	<i>Hebrews 9:8; Exodus 30:10</i>

Of Leviticus	"Word of God."	<i>Mark 7:10-13; Leviticus 20:9</i>
Of Deuteronomy	"Says the Lord."	<i>Hebrews 10:30; Deuteronomy 32:35, 36</i>
Of 1 Kings	"Answer of God."	<i>Romans 11:4; 1 Kings 19:10, 18</i>
Of 1 Chronicles	"He hath said."	<i>Hebrews 13:5; 1 Chronicles 28:20</i>
Of Psalms	"The Holy Ghost saith."	<i>Hebrews 3:7; Psalm 95:7</i>
Of Isaiah	"As God hath said."	<i>2 Corinthians 6:16; Isaiah 52:11</i>

Let us notice also some of the testimonies of the prophets as to how they received the divine revelation:*BSPC 14.15*

"The Lord spoke."	<i>Exodus 6:10.</i>
"Hear the word of the Lord."	<i>Isaiah 1:10</i>
"I have put my words into thy mouth."	<i>Jeremiah 1:9</i>
"The spirit of the Lord spoke by me."	<i>2 Samuel 23:2.</i>
"The word of the Lord by Jeremiah."	<i>2 Chronicles 36:21, 22.</i>
"Thus says the Lord."	<i>Ezekiel 2:4.</i>
"The word of the Lord came."	<i>Jonah 3:6.</i>
"The burden of the word of the Lord."	<i>Zechariah 9:1; Malachi 1:1.</i>
"Hear you the word which the Lord speaks."	<i>Jeremiah 10:1.</i>

"The Lord spoke unto Moses." This or its equivalent is found over fifty times in the book of Leviticus alone.

"The word of the Lord came." This or an equivalent is used in Jeremiah, over one hundred times; Ezekiel, over sixty times; Amos, over fifty times.

We would re-emphasize the fact that the New Testament writers endorsed the sacred origin of the Old Testament Scriptures. This can be seen all through the New Testament narrative.*BSPC 14.16*

Acts 1:16 "Holy Ghost by the mouth of David."

Acts 3:18 "God ... showed by the mouth of all his prophets."

Acts 10:43 "To him give all the prophets witness."

Acts 13:40 "Spoken of in the prophets."

See also: *Acts 7:42; 13:27; 15:15; 18:28; 24:14; 28:23; Romans 1:2; 3:21; 4:3; 9:17; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 3:8, 22; 4:30; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 1:1; 11:32; James 2:8, 23; 4:5; 1 Peter 2:6; Revelation 16:6; 22:9.BSPC 14.17*

The New Testament, however, puts its stamp of approval not merely on one part of the Old Testament Scriptures but:*BSPC 14.18*

On the Law

"The law of the Lord." *Luke 2:39.BSPC 14.19*

"The law of Moses." *Luke 2:22.BSPC 14.20*

See also *Matthew 12:5* and *Mark 10:3.BSPC 14.21*

On the Prophets

"God ... showed by the mouth of all his prophets." *Acts 3:18, 21.BSPC 16.1*

"His prophets." *Romans 1:2.BSPC 16.2*

See also *Ephesians 2:20; James 5:10; Hebrews 1:1.BSPC 16.3*

On the Psalms (Holy Writings)

Acts 13:35; Luke 24:44; Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16.BSPC 16.4

On Other Books

Matthew 24:15; Romans 10:5; 11:1, 3, 4.BSPC 16.5

A noteworthy fact is that each succeeding generation of prophets, as well as leaders in the church of God, accepted the divine revelation that came through the prophets who preceded them. The following references show the recognition and endorsement of:*BSPC 16.6*

The Writings of Moses

By Joshua—*Deuteronomy* 31:24; *Joshua* 23:6; by David—*1 Kings* 2:1-3; by Hilkiah and Josiah—*2 Kings* 22:8-13; By Daniel—*Daniel* 9:10, 11; by Ezra—*Ezra* 7:6, 10; by Nehemiah—*Nehemiah* 8:1-18; 9:3;—by Malachi—*Malachi* 4:4.BSPC 16.7

The Writings of the Prophets

By Daniel (of Jeremiah)—*Daniel 1:1, 2*; by Nehemiah (of prophets)
—*Nehemiah 9:26-29*. *BSPC 16.8*

The Writings of David

By Nehemiah (Psalms)—*Nehemiah 12:36 46.BSPC 16.9*

The Old Testament—*Luke 24:25, 27:44.BSPC 16.10*

Coming more directly to the thought of the “holy oracles” being the revealed will of God to man, we might notice how the divine illumination came to the prophets. We read that all Scripture is inspired of God. (*2 Timothy 3:16.*) This text is the only place in the New Testament where the Greek word for “inspiration” is used and so rendered. The word literally rendered is “God breathed” and is so translated by Rotherham in his Emphasized Translation of the New Testament. It means that God took possession of the human instrument and Himself breathed through him the words of life, of counsel, and of warning. In a special sense it was the voice of God.*BSPC 16.11*

Another step in this possession of the prophets of God is indicated by the apostle Peter in his epistle:*BSPC 16.12*

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” *2 Peter 1:21.BSPC 17.1*

Here it will be noted that the Holy Spirit is the motivating power. It is the Spirit of God that moves, directs, impels His servants the prophets. This was recognized not only in New Testament days but in the days long before that. We find even David makes this acknowledgment: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue.” *2 Samuel 23:2.BSPC 17.2*

But the Spirit of God “moved” the prophets. This is a word of wonderful significance. Literally, it means to be “borne along,” “carried along,” “impelled” or “driven.” Weymouth uses “impelled,” and in *Acts 27:15, 17* we read of the ship in which the apostle Paul sailed as being “driven” by the storm. This is the same word.*BSPC 17.3*

It is important that we remember that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God,” as we have it in the Authorized Version.*BSPC*

17.4

Many of the translations in English, such as the Interlinear, Montgomery, Rotherham, Ford, Revised Standard, Goodspeed, Weymouth, Knox (RC), Moffatt, and Verkuyl, render it this way.*BSPC 17.5*

One more thing might be observed when considering this important statement from the apostle's letter to Timothy, and that is the word all. It is not without reason that the Greek word pas ("all") is used in this instance. This word is rendered by several different words in the New Testament, and the following are worthy of thoughtful study:*BSPC 17.6*

In *Matthew 18:19* it is rendered "any." In *1 Thessalonians 5:18* it is rendered "every thing." In *Mark 7:18* it is rendered "whatsoever thing." In *Hebrews 4:15* it is rendered "all points."*BSPC 17.7*

It would be well also to observe that when Jesus referred to the prophecies concerning His work and mission, He used the same word "all" on several occasions. To the disciples on the road to Emmaus He told them "all that the prophets have spoken." (*Luke 24:25, 27, 44.*) On other occasions He mentioned "all things which are written" (*Luke 21:22*), "Till all be fulfilled" (*Matthew 5:18*). Peter stressed the same thought, "By the mouth of all his prophets" (*Acts 3:18, 21*); "to him give all the prophets witness" (*Acts 10:43*). So also did the apostle Paul in his great defense before Felix, where he declared he believed "all things which are written" (*Acts 24:14*).*BSPC 17.8*

Hence the word in *2 Timothy 3:16* is all-inclusive, and we do well to recognize the force of its meaning. The fact is that not a part, not certain sections of the Bible, not the testimony of one person here and there, is inspired, but all Scripture is God breathed. All of it is inspired of God and is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*BSPC 18.1*

B. B. Warfield has ably written:*BSPC 18.2*

"Scripture is thought of as the living voice of God speaking in all its parts directly to the reader.... Its authority rests on its divinity and its

divinity expresses itself in its trustworthiness; and the New Testament writers in all their use of it treat it as what they declare it to be—a God-breathed document, which, because God-breathed, as through and through trustworthy in all its assertions, authoritative in all its declarations, and down to its last particular, the very word of God, His ‘oracles.’”—*Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 94-96.*BSPC 18.3*

The Spirit of prophecy comment is:*BSPC 18.4*

“The union of the divine and the human, manifest in Christ, exists also in the Bible. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God’; yet they are expressed in the words of men and are adapted to human needs. Thus it may be said of the Book of God, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ And this fact, so far from being an argument against the Bible, should strengthen faith in it as the word of God. Those who pronounce upon the inspiration of the Scriptures, accepting some portions as divine while they reject other parts as human, overlook the fact that Christ, the divine, partook of our human nature, that he might reach humanity. In the work of God for man’s redemption, divinity and humanity are combined. There are many passages of Scripture which skeptical critics have declared to be uninspired, but which, in their tender adaptation to the needs of men, are God’s own messages of comfort to His trusting children.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 5:747, 748.*BSPC 18.5*

The Veracity of the Biblical Manuscripts*BSPC 18.6*

Quite often one hears of severe criticisms of the original manuscripts from which our Bible has been translated, Some claim that in the many copyings of the text through the years, mistakes are bound to have crept in, and that with the passing of the centuries it has become very doubtful whether we can be certain that we have a correct translation, and be sure that we have the actual word of God. It is true, of course, that there was always the danger of slight mistakes occurring in the copying of manuscripts. It should be remembered that the Hebrew language in its early written form was entirely written in consonants, no vowels at all being used. Furthermore, there were no spaces dividing one word from the

other. It would look much the same as if we should write *John 3:16* thus:*BSPC 18.7*

FRGDSLVDTHWRLDTHTHGVHSNLYBGTTNSN
THTWHSVRBLVTHNHMSHLDNTPRSHBTHV
VRLSTNGLF.

If a piece of writing of this kind were given to any of us, we should certainly experience considerable difficulty in knowing which vowels to use and also how to separate the various words one from another. It was not until the Jews returned from the captivity in Babylon that the Hebrew words were divided from one another and the Hebrew Old Testament arranged into paragraphs and verses. At this time the square Hebrew characters were substituted for the old Phoenician or archaic Hebrew alphabet. Such changes as were made were introduced gradually and covered quite a period of time. Dr. Ginsburg, a Christian Jew from Poland, who became an eminent Hebrew scholar, asserts that this work was begun in the days of Ezra by men known as the Sopherim, or scribes. Several centuries passed, it seems, before any further major changes were introduced. Vowel points came in about AD. 500 to 600, and were the work of men known as the Masoretes.*BSPC 19.1*

It should be remembered also that many of the Hebrew letters differed from others in a very small minor point. Even in the printed text such differences are not too easily discerned; how much more difficult to observe in handwritten copies! The following characters will illustrate this.*BSPC 19.2*

ø r could easily be mistaken for ã dh ç h could easily be mistaken for ä h è t could easily be mistaken for í s â w could easily be mistaken for æ z á b could easily be mistaken for ð n In view of these considerations, it seems nothing short of a miracle that the various manuscripts have come down to us in such wonderfully correct form as we have them today.*BSPC 19.3*

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that extreme care was taken by the copyists of the Sacred Word. Carefully observe the following:*BSPC 20.1*

“In making copies of Hebrew manuscripts which are the precious

heritage of the church to-day, the Jewish scribes exercised the greatest possible care, even to the point of superstition. Counting, not only the words, but every letter, noting how many times each particular letter occurred, and destroying at once the sheet on which a mistake was detected, in their anxiety to avoid the introduction of the least error into the sacred Scriptures, which they prized so highly and held in such reverent awe. Moreover, each new copy had to be made from an approved manuscript, written with a special kind of ink, upon sheets made from the skin of a “clean” animal. The writers also had to pronounce aloud each word before writing it, and on no account was a single word to be written from memory. They were to reverently wipe their pen before writing the name of God in any form, and to wash their whole body before writing “Jehovah,” lest that holy name should be tainted even in the writing. The new copy was then carefully examined with the original almost immediately: and it is said that if only one incorrect letter were discovered the whole copy was rejected!”—Sidney Collett, *The Scripture of Truth*, pp. 14, 15.*BSPC 20.2*

As to voluminous copying of the manuscript in ancient days, note:*BSPC 20.3*

“Yet in all these voluminous sacred documents, which have been copied times without number, the highest authorities assure us that, in regard to the New Testament, the variations of any importance introduced by copyists amount to less than one-thousandth of the entire text. While the Hebrew documents of the Old Testament show even less variation still!...*BSPC 20.4*

“Having, however, in the good providence of God, so many manuscripts to consult, the reader will understand that a copyist’s mistake in one is, as a rule, easily detected by the correct reading of the same passage in many of the other documents. So that it may be safely said, with the possession of these thousands of manuscripts, although they are only copies, we are practically able to arrive at the exact words of the Scriptures, as they originally came from God through His prophets and apostles.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.*BSPC 20.5*

Further, from Thomas H. Horne:*BSPC 20.6*

“The manuscripts of the New Testament, which are extant, are far more numerous than those of any single classic author whomsoever: upwards of three hundred and fifty were collated by Griesbach, for his celebrated critical edition. These manuscripts, it is true, are not all entire; most of them contain only the Gospels; others, the Gospels, *Acts of the Apostles*, and the Epistles; and a few contain the Apocalypse or Revelation of John. But they were all written in very different and distant parts of the world. Several of them are upwards of twelve hundred years old, and give us the books of the New Testament, in all essential points, perfectly accordant with each other, as any person may readily ascertain by examining the critical editions published by Mill, Kuster, Bengel, Wetstein, and Griesbach. The thirty thousand various readings, which are said to be found in the manuscripts collated by Dr. Mill, and the hundred and fifty thousand which Griesbach’s edition is said to contain, in no degree whatever affect the general credit and integrity of the text....*BSPC 20.7*

“The general uniformity, therefore, of the manuscripts of the New Testament, which are dispersed through all the countries in the known world, and in so great a variety of languages, is truly astonishing. And demonstrates both the veneration in which the Scriptures have uniformly been held, and the singular care which was taken in transcribing them. And so far are the various readings contained in these manuscripts from being hostile to the uncorrupted preservation of the books of the New Testament, (as some sceptics have boldly affirmed, and some timid Christians have apprehended,) that they afford us, on the contrary, an additional and most convincing proof that they exist at present, in all essential points, precisely the same as they were when they left the hands of their authors.”—*An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 1, pp. 106,107.*BSPC 21.1*

Purpose of the Divine Revelation

This aspect of the question can be dealt with but briefly, but God has a divine purpose in giving to His church this wonderful revelation of His will. Had sin never entered His fair domain, the Bible as we know it would never have been necessary. But sin came, and with it all the weakness and tragedy of the human race. Iniquity has blinded the minds of men; their perceptions of right and wrong have been warped, and, unaided by the Spirit of God, men cannot discern between good and evil. But, thank God, in His mercy and loving-kindness the Lord sent messages of warning and entreaty to the hearts of men. These we find incorporated in the writings of the Holy Bible, God's blessed gift to all mankind. If we ask why this word was given, we find a fairly complete answer in Paul's letter to Timothy, his own son in the faith. *2 Timothy 3:15-17.BSPC 21.2*

The statements in this passage of Scripture indicate God's divine purpose in the gift of His Holy Word, and it is evident that the dealings of God with His people in past generations are meant as a warning and a guide to us today. We read:*BSPC 21.3*

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." *Romans 15:4.BSPC 22.1*

We might profitably meditate also on the following important counsel from the Spirit of prophecy:*BSPC 22.2*

"Wonderful possibilities are open to those who lay hold of the divine assurances of God's word. There are glorious truths to come before the people of God. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be laid open before them. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing His will, they will know more and more of the oracles of God.*BSPC 22.3*

"Let the student take the Bible as his guide and stand like a rock for principle, and he may aspire to any height of attainment."—*Testimonies for the Church 8:322, 323.BSPC 22.4*

"The truths of the Bible, received, will uplift the mind from its

earthliness and debasement. If the word of God were appreciated as it should be, both young and old would possess an inward rectitude, a strength of principle, that would enable them to resist temptation.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 8:319.BSPC 22.5

Chapter 2—Christ and the Holy Scriptures

One cannot read the New Testament without a conviction that our Lord and Master had a high regard and a deep reverence for the word of God. It was on His lips continually; He referred to it at all times. It was the basis of all His teachings; He sought in every way to remove the traditional emphasis that had been placed upon it by the Pharisees of His day.*BSPC 23.1*

It has been said that in the New Testament there are about 280 quotations from the Old Testament and more than 350 allusions to the Sacred Writings. These quotations come from twenty five of the Old Testament books, and if we include the allusions, then references come from thirty-three of the books of the Sacred Writings. This means that thirty-three of the thirty-nine books are referred to in one way or another. These Old Testament references are represented in seventeen out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. We are told that Jesus Himself quoted from no less than twenty-four of the Old Testament books, and that among them were quotations from or allusions to the five books of Moses, the book of Psalms, the prophecy of Isaiah, and the book of Daniel. Those who have carefully classified these references assure us that there are*BSPC 23.2*

66 references from the five books of Moses 36 references from the collection of the *Psalms* 40 references from the prophecy of *Isaiah*
22 references from the book of Daniel*BSPC 23.3*

The Sacred Writings

The Scriptures the Savior used were what we know as the Old Testament. Jesus referred to the complete Holy Scriptures of His day when He mentioned *Luke 24:44*, “In the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” This was the threefold division of the Scriptures. On consulting the Jewish Bible in current use, one can see this same division and notice also the various books that entered into each division. They are as follows:*BSPC 23.4*

The Law (Pentateuch)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.*BSPC 24.1*

The Prophets (Major and Minor)

Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*BSPC 24.2*

The Writings (Hagiographa)

Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles.*BSPC 24.3*

Jesus Endorsed the “Scripture of Truth”

Christ our Lord endorsed these Holy Writings. He did this *BSPC 24.4*

1. For the Scriptures as a whole

“You do err, not knowing the scriptures.” *Matthew 22:29.BSPC 24.5*

“The scripture cannot be broken.” *John 10:35.BSPC 24.6*

“How are the Scriptures to be fulfilled which declare that thus it must be.” *Matthew 26:54, Weymouth.BSPC 24.7*

2. For the five books of Moses

“Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” *John 5:46.BSPC 24.8*

“Have you not read in the book of Moses?” *Mark 12:26.BSPC 24.9*

“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” *Luke 16:29.BSPC 24.10*

3. For the writings of the prophets

“That the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” *Matthew 26:56.BSPC 24.11*

“Slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” *Luke 24:25.BSPC 24.12*

“All things that are written by the prophets.” *Luke 18:31.BSPC 24.13*

4. For the Holy Writings (Psalms, etc.)

“In the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.” *Luke 24:44.BSPC 24.14*

“David himself says in the book of Psalms.” *Luke 20:42.BSPC*

24.15

“Spoken of by Daniel the prophet.” *Matthew 24:15.BSPC 24.16*

The expression “It is written” is used to introduce about eighty quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament, and the Savior made use of this term quite frequently in His reference to the Sacred Writings.*BSPC 24.17*

Reference to Incidents

In addition to the regular quotations made by Jesus during the period of His ministry, He referred, in His teaching, to many of the incidents recorded in the ancient books. In addition to other things He referred to the following:*BSPC 25.1*

The creation of man	The brazen serpent
The institution of marriage	The manna in the wilderness
Divorce	Giving of the Ten Commandments
The history of Noah	The tribute money
The Flood	The purification of lepers
Sodom and Gomorrah	David and the show bread
The story of Abraham	Solomon
Lot's wife	The Queen of Sheba
Moses and the bush	The widow of Sarepta
Circumcision	Jonah and the whale

Real Historical Characters

Jesus, in His complete and wholehearted acceptance of the ancient Scriptures, certainly regarded the historical characters as real men and not mere personified ideals or mythological heroes. When He referred to the patriarchs He spoke of them as men who played their part in the things of life and in the work of God. He would never have said to the Jewish leaders of His day, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: ... and was glad,” if Abraham had been unreal, connected with a folklore or mythology of those ancient times. He would never have said that Moses “Wrote of me” (*John 5:46*) if Moses had not written the books assigned to him; neither would He have spoken of David when David called Him Lord (*Matthew 22:45*) if the Psalms had not been written by the sweet singer of Israel. *BSPC 25.2*

Jesus the Messiah

Many are the names and titles given to the Son of God. Attention is here called to one expression of a general character that seems to have been in the thinking of the people in Christ's day. So many of the prophecies had pointed forward to the Messiah that the people had become used to speaking of Him as "the Coming One." We find this expression in *The Desire of Ages*, 236. One thing among others that undoubtedly led to that conviction was the prophecy given by Moses centuries before, that God would raise up a prophet like unto him. Hence the people came to speak in a general way of the One who should come.*BSPC 25.3*

This thought can be observed in several places in the Gospels. We read that John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the query, "Art thou he that should come?" *Matthew 11:3*. Reference is made to "that prophet that should come into the world" twice in the book of *John 6:14; 11:27*. The expression "that prophet" was used quite frequently. (*John 1:21, 25*.) Another prophecy which reads, "Blessed be he that comes in the name of the Lord" (*Psalms 118:26*), certainly found its fulfillment in Christ Jesus our Lord. On two different occasions these words were applied to Him—once when the people spread palm branches before Him on His way to Jerusalem (*Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38*), and again when Christ uttered His pronouncement of doom upon the Holy City (*Luke 13:35*).*BSPC 26.1*

Many of the leaders of the people would also remember that the Messiah was spoken of as the star that "shall come...out of Jacob" (*Numbers 24:17*), and also the words of Jacob in the blessing pronounced upon one of his sons, "until Shiloh come" (*Genesis 49:10*).*BSPC 26.2*

In all these references one observes the thought of "the Coming One"—either "that prophet that should come" or He that should come "in the name of the Lord." It was not surprising, therefore, that the people in their understanding of the prophetic portions of the Holy Scriptures should speak thus of the Messiah.*BSPC 26.3*

The Messiah

This thought of “the Coming One” found expression in another term—the Messiah. This word occurs twice in the Old Testament, *Daniel 9:25, 26*; and twice in the New Testament, *John 1:41; 4:25*. The Hebrew word rendered “Messiah” in Daniel’s prophecy is used thirty-nine times in the Hebrew Bible. Thirty seven times it is translated “anointed,” but twice, as already mentioned, it is translated “Messiah.” *BSPC 26.4*

The word Messiah means priest-king. He is “Messiah the prince”—the “Prince of princes.” He is the “priest upon his throne” (*Zechariah 6:13*); he is the “King [that] comes unto thee” (*Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5*). Yes, He is Melchizedek, which also means the priest-king, the “King of righteousness,” “the king of peace” (*Hebrews 7:2*). *BSPC 27.1*

Jesus Himself on several occasions claimed to be the Messiah. To the woman at the well of Samaria, who talked to Him of Messiah, He declared, “I that speak unto thee am he.” *John 4:26*. When confronted with the challenge of the high priest who demanded, “Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God,” Jesus replied, “Thou has said,” (*Matthew 26:63, 64*); “I am” (*Mark 14:62*). *BSPC 27.2*

His Relationship to the Father

Jesus was deeply conscious of His intimate relationship with His Father, and this is emphasized quite forcefully in the Gospel of John. The Savior knew He was the Messiah, and, as occasion offered, He revealed the sacredness and the vital importance of the mission entrusted to Him. Some of these expressions recorded in the fourth Gospel might be observed:*BSPC 27.3*

“As the Father raises up the dead.... so the Son quickens whom he will.” *John 5:21*. “As they honor the Father” “all men should honor the Son.” *Verse 23*. “What things so ever he does, these also does the Son likewise.” *Verse 19*. “As the Father bath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” *Verse 26.BSPC 27.4*

The Suffering Messiah

The emphasis of Jesus upon the divine character of the Holy Oracles is seen more clearly, perhaps, than anywhere else, in that post resurrection walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus, when He accompanied the two sorrowful and disappointed disciples. Then, as already observed, He not only put His seal of endorsement upon the three divisions of the Hebrew writings—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—but referred more particularly to prophecies that had been fulfilled in His death and resurrection. Let us get the picture before us, and note particularly the words He uttered to these bewildered disciples:*BSPC 27.5*

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.... And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”*BSPC 28.1*

“All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” *Luke 24:25-27, 44.BSPC 28.2*

What a thrilling experience this must have been! What joy must have filled the hearts of these disciples, for we read:*BSPC 28.3*

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” *Verses 45, 46.BSPC 28.4*

One cannot help wondering what prophecies and incidents in the Old Testament Jesus brought to their attention. On this Luke's narrative is silent. However, one may well imagine some of the many prophecies to which He referred. Jesus had before Him the whole range of the divine revelation, all the way from the first promise of the gospel in Eden (*Genesis 3:15*) at the time of the fall of man down to the promise of the forerunner of the Messiah, namely, John the Baptist (*Malachi 3:1-3*), who prepared the way of the Lord.*BSPC 28.5*

An excellent and very comprehensive list of references concerning

Christ, His sufferings, and death can be seen in the Pulpit Commentary, in notes on *Luke 24*. Among the references listed are the following:*BSPC 28.6*

The promise to Eve, *Genesis 3:15*; the promise to Abraham, *Genesis 22:18*; the paschal lamb, *Exodus 12*; the brazen serpent, *Numbers 21:9*; the greater Prophet, *Deuteronomy 18:15*; the star and scepter, *Numbers 24:17*; the smitten rock, *Numbers 20:11* 1 *Corinthians 10:4*.*BSPC 28.7*

Emmanuel, *Isaiah 7:14*; “unto us a child is born,” *Isaiah 9:6, 7*; the good Shepherd, *Isaiah 40:10, 11*; the meek Sufferer, *Isaiah 50:6*; He who bore our griefs, *Isaiah 53:4, 5*; the Branch, *Jeremiah 23:5; 33:14, 15*; the Heir of David, *Ezekiel 34:23*; the Ruler from Bethlehem *Micah 5:2*; the lowly King, *Zechariah 9:9*; the pierced Victim, *Zechariah 12:10*; the smitten Shepherd, *Zechariah 13:7*; the Messenger of the covenant, *Malachi 3:1*; the Sun of Righteousness *Malachi 3:1*; besides the references to several psalms, notably the sixteenth and the twenty-second.*BSPC 28.8*

The relation of Jesus to the Scriptures of the Old Testament has been well expressed in the Spirit of prophecy:*BSPC 29.1*

“Jesus taught the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority. Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted.”—*The Desire of Ages, 253*.*BSPC 29.2*

Truly our Lord and Master held the “scriptures of the prophets” as of the highest authority; He reckoned them to be in deed and in truth the word of the everlasting God.*BSPC 29.3*

The Witness of the Scriptures to Christ

Having considered Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament Scriptures, let us now give study to the witness of the ancient writings to Him. Many are the references in the Gospels and also the book of Acts.*BSPC 29.4*

The apostle Paul, when bearing his testimony before King Agrippa, said:*BSPC 29.5*

"I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." *Acts 26:22, 23.BSPC 29.6*

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, called David as a witness for Christ the Lord:*BSPC 29.7*

"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." *Acts 2:30-32.BSPC 29.8*

Philip, after reviewing the evidences in the Sacred Writings, bore his testimony to Nathanael in the following words:*BSPC 29.9*

"We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" *John 1:45.BSPC 29.10*

The apostle Peter, an energetic and faithful servant of God, bore his witness to Christ on many occasions. At the time of his discourse outside the gate of the Temple he declared:*BSPC 29.11*

"But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." *Acts 3:18.BSPC 29.12*

Still later we find him in the house of Cornelius preaching the Jesus who died and who rose from the dead, and then telling his hearers:*BSPC 30.1*

“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.” *Acts 10:43.BSPC 30.2*

Then, as we have already seen, we have the witness of Christ Jesus Himself. Observe the following quotations from the Spirit of prophecy:*BSPC 30.3*

“In every page, whether history, or precept, or prophecy, the Old Testament Scriptures are irradiated with the glory of the Son of God.... To Christ ‘give all the prophets witness.’”—*The Desire of Ages, 211.BSPC 30.4*

“The Savior is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New. It is the light from the prophetic past that brings out the life of Christ and the teachings of the New Testament with clearness and beauty.”—*The Desire of Ages, 799.BSPC 30.5*

This witness from the prophets of old is seen in many important aspects of the life and ministry of the Son of God. Let us seek to gather from the writings of old some of the testimonies borne by the seers of ancient days.*BSPC 30.6*

1. Related to the First Advent of Christ

The first promise concerning the Savior of mankind is found in *Genesis 3:15*, which reads as follows:*BSPC 30.7*

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*BSPC 30.8*

Thus in the early days of earth’s history, we behold in outline The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. Here is enmity between the great archenemy and the church of God; here is foretold the conflict between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. Here is the prophecy that Satan will bruise the heel of the

Savior; but, thank God, here is also the forecast that the Christ “shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” The Great Controversy will end in triumph for the kingdom of righteousness, for Satan and all his hosts will ultimately be eliminated, and the powers of evil go down forever in the darkness of the shadow of death.*BSPC 30.9*

It seems evident from this prophecy given in the Garden of Eden that the Redeemer was to come as the promised seed. The divine pledge concerning this is referred to several times in the New Testament records. In each case it has its application to Christ the Lord. (See *Romans 16:20*; *Hebrews 2:14*; *Galatians 3:16*; *Revelation 12:17*.)*BSPC 30.10*

The promise of the Coming Seed was repeated over and over again to the patriarchs and others. It was given to Abraham (*Genesis 22:18*; *Acts 3:25*), it was renewed to Isaac (*Genesis 26:4*), and it was confirmed to Jacob (*Genesis 28:14*). Notice should be taken, however, of the stress laid by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Galatia upon the word “seed” and not “seeds.” The promise of the Lord was made not to “seeds” but to the “seed.” The word given to Eve mentions her “seed.” The word given to Abraham is “so shall thy seed be.” The Twentieth Century translation of this text reads:*BSPC 31.1*

“Now it was to Abraham that the promises were made, ‘and to his offspring.’ The word ‘offspring’ was not used in the plural, as if many persons were meant, but the words were, ‘to thy offspring,’ showing that one person was meant—and that was Christ.”*BSPC 31.2*

Word from the Spirit of prophecy on this passage in Genesis reads as follows:*BSPC 31.3*

“Plain and specific prophecies had been given regarding the appearance of the Promised One. To Adam was given an assurance of the coming of the Redeemer. The sentence pronounced on Satan, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel,’ was to our first parents a promise of the redemption to be wrought out through Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 222.*BSPC 31.4*

Other phases of the work of our Savior Jesus Christ as foretold in the writings of the prophets of old will now be reviewed somewhat more or less in tabular form:*BSPC 31.5*

2. Related to the Birth of Jesus

The time of the Advent. *Daniel 9:24, 25; John 1:41; 4:25, 26; Romans 5:6; Galatians 4:4.**BSPC 31.6*

The virgin birth. *Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:3; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:26-35.**BSPC 31.7*

The place of His birth. *Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1, 6; Luke 2:4; John 7:42.**BSPC 31.8*

The flight into Egypt. *Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15.**BSPC 31.9*

The massacre of the innocents. *Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:17, 18,**BSPC 31.10*

3. Related to Christ’s Life and Ministry

Many were the symbols and figures used in ancient days by which the coming Messiah was foreshadowed, but only a few will be referred to:*BSPC 32.1*

Shiloh	<i>Genesis 49:10</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages, 34</i>
The Rock	<i>Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Corinthians 10:4</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages, 412, 413</i>
The Angel of Jehovah	<i>Exodus 14:19; Acts 7:35, 38</i>	<i>Mount of Blessing, p. 170</i>
The Branch	<i>Zechariah 6:12; Luke 1:78</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages, 103</i>
The I Am	<i>Exodus 3:14; John 8:58</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages, 52</i>
The Cornerstone	<i>Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages, 600</i>
The Desire of Nations	<i>Haggai 2:7; Hebrews 10:37</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages, 187</i>

Various aspects of the ministry of Jesus were foretold by the ancient prophets. Observe the following:*BSPC 32.2*

The beginning and nature of His work. *Isaiah 61:1, 3; 42:1, 4; Luke 4:16-21; Isaiah 9:1, 2; Matthew 4:15, 16.*BSPC 32.3

His work as prophet. *Deuteronomy 18:15; John 1:45; 6:14; Acts 3:22; 7:37.*BSPC 32.4

His purification of the Temple. *Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11; John 2:14, 15; Matthew 21:12; Luke 19:45, 46.*BSPC 32.5

His rejection by the people. *Psalms 2:1; John 6:66; Acts 4:25-27.*BSPC 32.6

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. *Isaiah 62:11; Matthew 21:1, 10; John 12:14, 16; Zechariah 9:9.*BSPC 32.7

4. Relating to His Sufferings and Death

The betrayal. *Psalms 41:9; Matthew 26:15; Mark 14:10, 21.*BSPC 32.8

The sufferings. *Isaiah 52:14; 53:4, 6, 12; Matthew 8:17; Acts 3:18; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 3:18.*BSPC 32.9

The piercing of hands and feet. *Psalms 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; John 20:27.*BSPC 32.10

The insult and mocking. *Psalms 22:6, 7; 109:25; Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29.*BSPC 32.11

The gall and Vinegar. *Psalms 69:21; Matthew 27:34; John 19:29.*BSPC 32.12

The lots for vesture. *Psalms 22:18; Mark 15:24; John 19:24.*BSPC 33.1

Silence in accusation. *Psalms 38:13; Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 26:63; 27:12, 14.*BSPC 33.2

Not a bone broken. *Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; John 19:36.*BSPC 33.3

The crucifixion. *Numbers 21:9; Matthew 27:31, 49; Mark 15:22, 37; Luke 23:33-46; John 3:14; John 19:16-39.BSPC 33.4*

The death and burial. *Isaiah 53:9, 12; Psalm 16:9; 22:1; 31:5; Matthew 27:46, 57, 60; Luke 23:46.BSPC 33.5*

“Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption.”—*Steps to Christ, 15.BSPC 33.6*

5. Related to His Resurrection

The following passages of Scripture could be studied with profit: *Psalm 2:7; 16:10; Joshua 6:12; Isaiah 55:3 with Acts 2:27-31; 13:34, 35; Matthew 27:63; 28:6.BSPC 33.7*

“Under the inspiration of the Almighty, the sweet singer of Israel had testified to the glories of the resurrection morn. ‘My flesh also,’ he joyously proclaimed, ‘shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.’”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 227.BSPC 33.8*

6. Related to His Ascension

Psalm 68:18; 110:1 with Ephesians 4:8, 10; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9; Hebrews 1:1BSPC 33.9

7. Related to His Coming Kingdom

His second coming. *Psalm 50:3, 5; 98:8, 9; Acts 3:20, 21.BSPC 33.10*

His everlasting kingdom. *Daniel 7:13, 14; Luke 1:32, 33; Revelation 11:15.BSPC 33.11*

Christ Spoke Through the Prophets of Old

There is an intimate relationship between the Old and the New Testament; in fact, the one is the complement of the other. To understand the one, we need to study the other. Both are important aspects of the divine revelation to men. The more we compare the two Testaments, the better we shall be able to understand God's plan for the human race, and the more fully shall we comprehend the marvelous plan of redemption. If the light of the Old shines upon the New, and the beauty and glory of the New streams through the pages of the Old, the Bible will be to us a wonderful treasure, a book of light and understanding, a book that will be to us in ever-increasing measure the word of the living God.*BSPC 33.12*

The Spirit of prophecy has well remarked:*BSPC 34.1*

"The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Christ as manifested to the patriarchs, as symbolized in the sacrificial service, as portrayed in the law, and as revealed by the prophets, is the riches of the Old Testament. Christ in His life, His death, and His resurrection; Christ as He is manifested by the Holy Spirit, is the treasure of the New. Both Old and New present truths that will continually reveal new depths of meaning to the earnest seeker."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 462, 463.*BSPC 34.2*

Both Testaments Have the Same Divine Author

The reason these two Testaments are so intimately related is that they have the same Author. It is true the messages came through men, men whom God had chosen through the centuries, but they were channels and only channels through whom the Divine Oracles came. The divine and the human were beautifully blended, so much so that the messages bore the marks of human personality. The background, the education, the culture, and the surroundings of the individual all left their impress upon the testimonies of warning and counsel that the messengers of the Most High gave to the children of men.*BSPC 34.3*

In the Spirit of prophecy we read:*BSPC 34.4*

“It is the voice of Christ that speaks through *Patriarchs and Prophets*, from the days of Adam even to the closing scenes of time.”—*The Desire of Ages*, 799.*BSPC 34.5*

“The Savior had spoken through all the prophets. ‘The Spirit of Christ which was in them’ ‘testified beforehand the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, 234.*BSPC 34.6*

“It was Christ that spoke to His people through the prophets.... It is the voice of Christ that speaks to us through the Old Testament. ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 366, 367.*BSPC 34.7*

“He [Christ] spoke the word of God as He had spoken it to all the Old Testament writers. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ.”—*Gospel Workers*, 250.*BSPC 34.8*

The same message of salvation, the same unfolding of the purpose of God, the same grand objective to restore all that was lost at the fall of man is discernible all through the pages of Holy Writ. It could hardly be otherwise, for all the books have the same Author and we behold the same divine Person, we recognize the same voice, in them all. On this Dean Farrar has remarked:*BSPC 34.9*

“God spoke alike from Sinai and from heaven. The difference of the

places whence they spoke involves the whole difference of their tone and revelations. Perhaps the writer regarded Christ as the speaker alike from Sinai as from Heaven, for even the Jews represented the Voice of Sinai as being the Voice of Michael, who was sometimes identified with the 'Shechinah,' or the Angel of the Presence."—F. W. Farrar, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, p. 161, in Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges.*BSPC 35.1*

Christ With His Church in Old Testament Days

God had declared to Israel that “my name is in him”: it was through Him God spoke to Moses and also to His people in olden times. This is recognized by the New Testament writers, for we read that it was—*BSPC 35.2*

“the Spirit of Christ which was in them ... when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” *1 Peter 1:11.BSPC 35.3*

The same thought is seen also in *Hebrews 12:25*, where reference is made to Him “that speaks from heaven.”*BSPC 35.4*

Bloomfield in his Greek Testament tells us that—*BSPC 35.5*

“this is by many modern Expositors referred to God; but by the ancient and some modern ones, to Christ; which is far more agreeable to the context.”—S. T. Bloomfield, *The Greek New Testament* (1844), vol. 2, p. 475.*BSPC 35.6*

As to the voice that was heard speaking from Sinai, as is recorded in *verse 26*, he remarks:*BSPC 35.7*

“The best Expositors are in general agreed that the [word] ... refers ... to Christ, notwithstanding that the thing is in Exodus ascribed to God. Nor is there any inconsistency, since the NT. and the Rabbinical writings agree in representing it as the SON OF GOD, who appeared to the patriarchs, who delivered the Law by angels, and who was the ANGEL-JEHOVAH worshipped in the Hebrew church.”—*Ibid.BSPC 35.8*

Furthermore, the same blessed Lord is seen in the church in the wilderness. Stephen, in his recitation of God’s dealings with His people through the centuries, recalls that the Angel of the covenant was present at the giving of the law at Sinai. (*Acts 7:38.*) Moses was the mediator between the Angel of Jehovah and the children of Israel. On this, observe the remarks of Ellen G. White:*BSPC 35.9*

“During all the wanderings of Israel, Christ, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, was their leader.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 311.BSPC 36.1*

“Christ was not only the leader of the Hebrews in the wilderness,—the Angel in whom was the name of Jehovah, and who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host,—but it was He who gave the law to Israel. Amid the awful glory of Sinai, Christ declared in the hearing of all the people the ten precepts of His Father’s law. It was He who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 366.*BSPC 36.2*

This is still further emphasized in the ancient Jewish paraphrases on the books of Moses. Several centuries before the Christian Era, devoted Jewish writers like Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel and others gathered together oral interpretations and paraphrases of parts of the Sacred Scriptures. In the oral form they hark back to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, but in their written form as we have them today they come to us from about the second or third century AD. These were known as Targums, and the dictionary defines this word as:*BSPC 36.3*

“a general term for the Aramaic versions—often paraphrases—of the Old Testament, which became necessary when, after and perhaps during the Babylonian exile, Hebrew began to die out as a popular language, and was supplanted by Aramaic.”*BSPC 36.4*

It is interesting to observe how the truth of certain quotations from *Patriarchs and Prophets* is recognized in these Targums. Attention will be called to a few to enable the reader to see that these Jewish teachers certainly recognized that God spoke and worked through the Angel of Jehovah—the Angel of the Lord, whom we know was none other than Christ the Lord.*BSPC 36.5*

1. “It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaiah, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 366.*BSPC 36.6*

To Adam. *Genesis 1:27; 2:8; 3:22.BSPC 36.7*

To Noah. *Genesis 7:16; 8:1; 9:12, 13, 15, 16.BSPC 36.8*

To Abraham. *Genesis 15:1, 6; 17:27; 19:24.BSPC 36.9*

To Jacob. *Genesis 28:20, 21; 46:1, 2.BSPC 36.10*

To Joseph. *Genesis 39:2, 3, 21, 23.BSPC 36.11*

2. "It was He who gave the law to Israel.... It was He who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone."—*Ibid.BSPC 36.12*

In each of the following texts instead of the word "God" or the word "Lord" it will be observed that it was the "Word" who spoke: *Exodus 19:3, 5, 9; 20:1, 7; Deuteronomy 4:24, 36; 5:5.BSPC 37.1*

3. "Christ was the angel in whom was the name of Jehovah, and who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host."—*Ibid.BSPC 37.2*

Here again the Hebrew word Memra is used in the Targums, which is translated in the English version by "word." Here in place of "and the Lord said," it would be "and the Word said." Note the following scriptures: *Exodus 14:15, 25, 31; Numbers 14:9, 20, 43.BSPC 37.3*

How true it is that "Christ ... spoke to His people through the prophets."—*Ibid.* It was "the Spirit of Christ ... in them" which "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." *1 Peter 1:11*. "In the plan of redemption Christ is the Alpha and the Omega."—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 367*. Christ is first, last, and always. He has ever been with His people, He is with them today, and He will be with them forever and ever.*BSPC 37.4*

Enraptured With the Word of God

This is an experience the children of God may know as they enter into fellowship with Him. What the disciples experienced in their contact with Jesus on the road to Emmaus must have brought a wonderful revelation to their hearts. The new courage that came to them, the light that broke in on their darkness, led them to exclaim, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?” *Luke 24:32*. The word used for “burn” in this passage is a general word used throughout the New Testament to indicate the thought of “burning.” It is used twelve times, eleven of which it is rendered by the word “burn” and once by the word “light.” It is the word used for the lights in the Temple, which not only shed light but to a certain degree gave warmth. It is used metaphorically of the glow of ecstasy in the human heart and of spiritual light that dawns upon the soul.*BSPC 37.5*

But what an expression, and how full of meaning! This is the only place in the Holy Scriptures where we find an expression just like this. Everything that light is when it shines in the darkness is involved—its satisfying warmth, its brilliance which reveals, enabling us to see that which before was hidden from our eyes. The disciples had read the Scriptures, but they did not understand them; they had pondered carefully the divine words, but they did not comprehend them. Now the light breaks in; the darkness is dispelled; that which was obscure now stands out in all its beauty and radiance. The things that had perplexed them are now clear and plain, and the realization of it all overwhelms them. The intensity of light causes a glow of fervent love to well up in a deep affection for Jesus, whom they now know without shadow of doubt to be the Messiah, the Sent of God.*BSPC 37.6*

From Jesus to Messiah

Before the day of the crucifixion many of the people, including even these two disciples, had thought of Jesus as the Christ the Messiah. They had even called Him by this name and had borne their witness to others concerning Him. But the shadows had fallen. Their hopes had been blasted, and as they talked with the Stranger they showed their disappointment, and they called Him merely by the name Jesus. When asked by their traveling companion as to what was their perplexity, they said, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth." They no longer called Him Christ, the Messiah. That hope had gone. When they realized that His life had been taken, all their hopes had dissipated. The Stranger began to reveal Himself, however. The light began to dawn in their minds. They observed what He had said, "Ought not Christ [Messiah] to have suffered these things?" How this must have impressed their hearts, for here was one, apparently unaware of what had taken place in Jerusalem, calling Him "Messiah." No wonder they were fascinated with the One who walked and talked with them. But their interest deepened, new hope arose in their hearts. Christ "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." The word "expounded" in this passage is quite significant. There is another Greek word translated "expound" in the New Testament in such places as *Acts 11:4; 18:26; 28:23* that means "to put forth, to expose, to set forth, to declare"; but the word used in this instance has the thought of "to interpret and to interpret thoroughly." The Greek word is used six times in the New Testament, being rendered "interpret" or "interpretation" five times and "expounded" once. Hence, what the Savior did was not so much to preach or proclaim but to take the word of God and give to these disciples a full understanding by interpreting fully the prophecies pointing forward to His crucifixion and resurrection. A well-known commentator remarks:*BSPC 38.1*

"He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, which the word they had heard from him directed them to; 'all things must be fulfilled which were written.' Christ had given them this general hint, for the regulating of their expectations, that whatever they found written concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament must be fulfilled in him, what was written concerning his sufferings, as well as what was written concerning his kingdom, those God had

joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought they should be put asunder in the event. All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar; he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, 'It is finished.' The several parts of the Old Testament are here mentioned, as containing each of them things concerning Christ: "the law of Moses," that is, the Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses; 'the prophets,' containing not only the books that are purely prophetical, but those historical books that were written by prophetical men. 'The Psalms' contain also the other writings, which they called the Hagiographa."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary* (London: Partridge and Co., 1854), vol. 3, p. 356.*BSPC 39.1*

Then we read that "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him."*BSPC 39.2*

Again we say, "What a wonderful experience!" Such an experience, however, may be ours today. It is possible for us to know the sacred gladness of which these disciples became so conscious on that never-to-be-forgotten walk with Jesus. Let us seek for the illumination to beam from heaven into our hearts and minds. As we wait upon God we may hear the still small voice speaking peace to our soul. The Spirit of God is still in His church, and as we seek Him, He will guide us "into all truth."*BSPC 39.3*

We read:*BSPC 39.4*

"If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch."—*The Desire of Ages*, 668.*BSPC 39.5*

Beholding Jesus in the Divine Word

The tragic thing is that one may read the Scriptures without seeing the Lord and Savior. Many peruse the divine word with critical minds; they are doubtful of the authenticity of the Scriptures. Others fear the ridicule of friends and neighbors; they come to it with a veil upon their hearts. Many are willing to accept the Bible as a revelation from God, but if the heart is not right with Him, they will fail to behold “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”*BSPC 39.6*

The Jews of old recognized the Holy Writings as of God; they revered the Divine Oracles very highly. At times men could be found who would rather yield up their lives than deny the word of God. But even though they were so privileged, they failed to discern in Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah, the Holy One of God.*BSPC 40.1*

Time after time Jesus had reminded them of this, as we have already seen, but the veil was upon their hearts. (*2 Corinthians 3:15*.) Even the disciples had a difficult time to comprehend the Master’s words. Their minds were so filled with the prejudices of their times (they entertained with others wrong expectations concerning the coming of the Messiah) that they failed to understand God’s purpose in the mission of Christ. Time after time Jesus sought to prepare them for the great crisis of the cross, but it seems as though His words fell, to a large degree, on deaf ears.*BSPC 40.2*

Then came the resurrection; then came the experience with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus; then followed the experience in the upper room—the personal revelation of the Christ to their hearts. They could see Him; they could touch Him. Once again their hopes revived, the scales fell from their eyes, and they recognized even the sufferings of the Messiah as a necessary prelude to the “glory that should follow.”*BSPC 40.3*

In later days the Ethiopian eunuch, when reading the prophecy of Isaiah, failed to understand the meaning of the divine prediction. But God sent His servant Philip, who “preached unto him Jesus.”

Here again the light shone, and the darkness fled away. Another soul was illuminated by the divine rays, and there was born in his heart a longing desire to obey his new-found Lord.*BSPC 40.4*

So it may be with us. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and if the soul is surrendered to the Lord, there is no limit to the wonderful revelation God will make to the heart and mind. As we read the Holy Bible let us pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we may be led to see the Son of God, not only in the Old Testament; but also in the New.*BSPC 40.5*

Chapter 3—Searching the Scriptures

“The Bereans gave serious attention to the word, searching in the holy Writings every day, to see if these things were so.” *Acts 17:11, The New Testament in Basic English*.BSPC 40.6

Such is the record of one earnest group of believers in the days of the apostolic church. Their noble example has been placed in the story of early days that we might catch the inspiration and go and do likewise. The Holy Oracles, whether of the Old Testament or of the New, constitute God’s message to men; they are just as much His message as though He should speak audibly from heaven, and we ourselves should hear His voice.BSPC 40.7

“So with the promises of God’s word. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, 122.BSPC 40.8

The little company at Berea discerned His voice in the Holy Writings, and just as they were commended by the Lord for their earnest and painstaking inquiry into His word, so will the Lord look upon His children today with joy and pleasure as they prayerfully and diligently search into the Scriptures of truth.BSPC 40.9

The counsel of the Lord to His people is:BSPC 40.10

“You should search the Bible; for it tells you of Jesus. As you read the Bible, you will see the matchless charms of Jesus. You will fall in love with the Man of Calvary, ... you may drink of the wells of salvation.... Then your lips will speak thanksgiving to God.”—*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, 293.BSPC 40.11

Steps in Searching the Word of God

Let us meditate on some of the steps that might be taken in our approach to the study of the word of our God.*BSPC 40.12*

The First Step

First, we are urged to hear or to read. In the Apocalypse the divine blessing is pronounced upon him “that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.” *Revelation 1:1* In one place the Savior mentioned that “they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” *Luke 16:29*. In another place He refers to those “that hears my word.” In other references to the word of God emphasis is laid upon reading the Scriptures of truth. Isaiah earnestly counseled the children of Israel to “seek you out the book of the Lord, and read” (*Isaiah 34:16*); whereas Ezra himself read in the book of Moses to the people. (*Nehemiah 8:13*).*BSPC 42.1*

Both hearing and reading the good tidings from heaven are good, but there is something of greater importance—that as a result of our hearing or our reading we understand the truth of God. This is what Jesus stressed in His ministry. After outlining the prophecy of Daniel to the people He said, “Who so reads, let him understand.” *Matthew 24:15*. We learn about the eunuch of Ethiopia, who was returning from Jerusalem to his native land, reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The words, however, were unintelligible to him. Over and over again he pondered on their meaning. Then came the servant of the Lord, and as Philip explained the meaning of what was written in the Book, light from heaven dawned upon the mind of this emissary of the Ethiopian queen. Now he understood, and could rejoice in the message that brought such blessing to his heart.*BSPC 42.2*

This is the purpose of God, for He declared that those who bear fruit to His glory are those “that hears the word, and understands it.” *Matthew 13:23*. The first thing, then, is to listen, to keep an open ear, or maybe to read the word of God; but we need ever to bear in mind that whether we are listening or reading, God looks to us to understand His word.*BSPC 42.3*

The Second Step

The second step is to meditate on, to give consideration to, [and] to ponder on the Divine Word. We may hear, but unless there is a keen interest we may very soon forget; we may read, but even this may pass from our remembrance, just as sand falls through the sieve. It is vital that we meditate upon the words of life. The apostle Paul counseled Timothy, his son in the faith, to “meditate upon these things.” *1 Timothy 4:15*. We are urged to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” Hebrews M. David “considered” God’s testimonies. *Psalms 119:95*. Job “considered the works of God.” *Job 37:14*. So we are to consider for ourselves—we are to meditate—we are to seek to discover new beauties in the Holy Scriptures, and so be built up in the knowledge of God and in the most holy faith. *BSPC 42.4*

The Lord has told us in the Spirit of prophecy: *BSPC 43.1*

“Let the student keep his Bible always with him, and as he has opportunity, read a text and meditate upon it. While walking in the streets, waiting at a railway station, waiting to meet an engagement, let him improve the opportunity to gain some precious thought from the treasure house of truth.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 463*. *BSPC 43.2*

“He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures, must meditate upon the truth.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 59, 60*. *BSPC 43.3*

The Third Step

The third step is to search prayerfully and to study diligently God’s Holy Book. This will call for the application of the mind and for earnest thought in the perusal of the Divine Writings. Searching will mean a critical examination, a diligent and faithful comparison of scripture with scripture, with collateral reading from the Spirit of prophecy and works of history, Bible geography, also the manners and customs of ancient times. It will call for fervent prayer and consecration of heart and mind, so that the Spirit of God may lead and guide us into all truth. *BSPC 43.4*

This was the experience of the noble Bereans of ancient days. We read:*BSPC 43.5*

“At Berea Paul found Jews who were willing to investigate the truths he taught.... The minds of the Bereans were not narrowed by prejudice. They were willing to investigate the truthfulness of the doctrines preached by the apostles. They studied the Bible, not from curiosity, but in order that they might learn what had been written concerning the promised Messiah. Daily they searched the inspired records; and as they compared scripture with scripture, heavenly angels were beside them, enlightening their minds and impressing their hearts.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 231.BSPC 43.6*

The Savior Himself gave to the Jews of His day admonition to which we do well to take heed.*BSPC 43.7*

“Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” *John 5:39.BSPC 44.1*

As we study diligently the Sacred Scriptures we are in good company, for the prophets of old did the same thing. We read that they “inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” *1 Peter 1:10, 11.BSPC 44.2*

Let us follow their noble example and the example also of the little church at Berea, and we too shall find that the word of God contains wonderful treasures of precious truth.*BSPC 44.3*

“It is a precious book, a wonderful book. It is a treasury containing jewels of precious value. It is a history that opens to us the past centuries. Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the occurrences of past ages. Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention. It gives not only the history of the creation of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and it reveals to our understanding the Author of the heavens and the earth. It unfolds a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy.

Those who are dose students of the word of God, and who obey its instructions, and love its plain truths, will improve in mind and manners. It is an endowment of God that should awaken in every heart the most sincere gratitude; for it is the revelation of God to man.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 129.BSPC 44.4

“The study of the Bible demands our most diligent effort and persevering thought. As the miner digs for the golden treasure in the earth, so earnestly, persistently, must we seek for the treasure of God’s word.”—*Education*, 189.BSPC 44.5

Knowing the Truth

It is evident from these considerations that the purpose and plan of God for His children is that they know the precious word of truth. If we heed the divine counsel, we shall be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” *2 Timothy 3:17*. Put in another form and in relation to the truth of God, it might be listed as follows:*BSPC 44.6*

It is desired by God that we know the truth (*1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:7; Hebrews 10:26; 2 John 1*); acknowledge the truth (*2 Timothy 2:25; Titus 1:1*); believe the truth (*2 Thessalonians 2:13*); obey the truth (*Galatians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:22*); love the truth (*2 Thessalonians 2:10*); speak the truth (*Ephesians 4:15*).*BSPC 44.7*

Well has the messenger of the Lord said:*BSPC 45.1*

“In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom.... God has made known His will, and it is folly for man to question that which has gone out of His lips. After Infinite Wisdom has spoken, there can be no doubtful questions for man to settle, no wavering possibilities for him to adjust. All that is required of him is a frank, earnest concurrence in the expressed will of God. Obedience is the highest dictate of reason as well as of conscience.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 506.BSPC 45.2*

Christ the Secret of Knowing the Word of God

Jesus highly revered and deeply loved the word of His Father. Centuries ago the sweet singer of Israel declared concerning Him, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." *Psalm 40:8.BSPC 45.3*

As in Jesus, who is both the Son of God and the Son of man, we see the divine and the human perfectly blended, so it is in the Sacred Word of Jehovah. Men speak, men declare the word, the message comes through lips of clay, but God is the Author; it is His word; men were the channels through whom the heavenly message was given.*BSPC 45.4*

This has been well expressed in an excellent article on inspiration in the New Analytical Indexed Bible, which reads as follows:*BSPC 45.5*

"We are not to assume that inspiration is operative apart from the human channel employed; that it disregards the qualities or characteristics of the one inspired and that he becomes a mere automaton. On the contrary, these very characteristics are employed so that John's Gospel, for example, reflects the qualities of the man John and by the second Gospel we see that a wholly different type of man was used for that task. Paul's Epistles are as different from Peter's Epistles as the man Paul differs from the man Peter. Inspiration, so far from rendering unnecessary the characteristics of those who were inspired, uses them and the inspired message is stamped by the peculiarities of each. It is thus human and Divine."—pages 11, 12.*BSPC 45.6*

This union of the divine and the human in the Scriptures of truth it is our privilege to study, but to enter into such a meditation, guided by the greatest Teacher, is another wonderful privilege. Arthur T. Pierson years ago remarked:*BSPC 45.7*

"The Inspired Written Word and the Eternal Living Word are forever inseparable. The Bible is Christ portrayed; Christ is the Bible fulfilled. One is the picture, the other is the person, but the features are the same and proclaim their identity."—*Knowing the Scriptures*, p. 34.*BSPC 46.1*

The Scriptures, an Unerring Guide

It is not surprising to find in the Bible that the word of God bears many of the characteristics of its Author. This will be seen in the following brief classification:*BSPC 46.2*

God is	His word is
Life <i>John 5:26; 6:57</i>	Life <i>Philippians 2:16</i>
Righteousness <i>Jeremiah 23:6</i>	Righteousness <i>Hebrews 5:13</i>
Truth <i>Jeremiah 10:10</i>	Truth <i>James 1:18</i>
Holiness <i>Exodus 15:11</i>	Holiness <i>Jeremiah 23:9</i>

This is but natural; we should be surprised if it were otherwise. Our heavenly Father, who is the truth, has given us His word, which is the word of truth. His word is the reflection of Himself. If we desire to see Him and become acquainted with Him, we must read and meditate upon that word. Furthermore, as we accept this divine revelation from heaven, it will beget in our hearts the same qualities. The power in the word of our God transforms human lives, and by the Divine Spirit imparts righteousness and truth and holiness, and if the sons of God are faithful to the end, eternal life will be given to them.*BSPC 46.3*

What a privilege it is to have such a wonderful treasure! How we should prize it! How we should believe in it! To believe, however, means more than mere mental assent; it calls for more than a recognition of historical incidents. The evidence that a certain thing happened in the days long ago may be so convincing and so well established that we could not do otherwise than accept it, but Bible believing means more than this. It means more than historic faith; Bible believing means saving faith. It means believing not merely with the mind but with the heart. It is possible to believe in Jesus as a man, to believe that He lived and died, that He rose again and actually ascended to the Father's throne, and yet not be saved by the grace of God. We may believe this as a historic fact just as O might believe that certain characters in history lived and played the part history assigns to them. Such faith, however, does not save the soul. What is called for is a faith that touches the heart as well as the mind. This is what the apostle Paul meant when in writing to the

church at Rome he said:*BSPC 46.4*

“If thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” *Romans 10:9, 10.BSPC 47.1*

Notice in these words of counsel that it does not say “believe in thy mind,” but “believe in your heart.” This is the kind of belief God longs to see. But one may query, How is it possible to believe with the heart? Believing with the mind presents no particular problem, but to believe with the heart, how can such a thing be? It is true that one of the early contacts of the word of God with man is as we find it in the prophecy of Isaiah, where the Lord gives the invitation through His servant, “Come now, and let us reason together.” *Isaiah 1:18.BSPC 47.2*

Here is the invitation to “reason together.” This is where the mind of man plays its part. First of all we hear, we read, we ponder, we meditate upon the message of God; the mind reasons, it examines what is presented; then in some mysterious way something happens. Our minds are convinced of the truth. Now there wells up from our inmost souls a deep longing to obey God and be faithful to the truth of the Bible. That longing soon reaches its climax in surrender, and when this happens peace comes to the soul. The mind was the door to the heart. We were convinced of the truth; then we became convicted of the truth. The one touched the mind, the other touched the heart.*BSPC 47.3*

This Holy Book accepted, believed, and trusted implicitly will be a true guide in the uncertain paths of life. It is unerring in its guidance; it will never fail us. Just as God the Father says, “I will guide thee with mine eye” (*Psalms 32:8*), so does God the Son assure us that He is the true and living way (*John 14:6*). God the Holy Spirit, the true representative or vicegerent of the Son of God in the church, will also guide you “into all truth.” So also are the Scriptures designed to lead us in the way of righteousness and peace. The psalmist learned this centuries ago, for he declared, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” *Psalms 119:105.BSPC*

We can thank God for such an unfailing guide. Observe the words given to us by the Spirit of prophecy:*BSPC 48.1*

“We all need a guide through the many strait places in life as much as the sailor needs a pilot over the sandy bar or up the rocky river, and where is this guide to be found? We point you, dear brethren, to the Bible. Inspired of God, written by holy men, it points out with great clearness and precision the duties of both old and young. It elevates the mind, softens the heart, and imparts gladness and holy joy to the spirit. The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life. Take it as the man of your counsel, the rule of your daily life.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 51, p. 264.*BSPC 48.2*

The Alpha and Omega of Knowledge

The Scriptures of truth are a full, complete, and perfect guide to the children of God. Everything we need for our salvation is found therein. The word of God is able to make us “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (*2 Timothy 3:15*); it is given also that “the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (*verse 17*).*BSPC 48.3*

It is the book of knowledge; it is the book of wisdom. It is the alpha and omega of the will of God for men. Just as Christ, the eternal Son, is the alpha and the omega (*Revelation 21:6; 22:13*), so also is the word of the everlasting God.*BSPC 48.4*

The Rule of Faith and Doctrine

The Bible is the divine standard of all true doctrine; it is the standard also by which our lives are to be regulated day by day. God's faithful people all through the ages have recognized His word as such a standard. The appeal in times of controversy has ever been, "What says the scripture?" (*Romans 4:3; Galatians 4:30*); the decision has been recognized as final when the servant of God could declare, "The scripture says." (*Romans 9:17; 10:11*)*BSPC 48.5*

In the long, long ago Isaiah gave the word:*BSPC 48.6*

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." *Isaiah 8:20.BSPC 48.7*

From the Spirit of prophecy we have the following counsel:*BSPC 48.8*

"The Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of faith."—*Testimonies on Sabbath School Work*, p. 32.*BSPC 48.9*

"As the Spirit of God becomes better known, the Bible will be accepted as the only foundation of faith."—*Testimonies for the Church 8:192, 193.BSPC 48.10*

It is well at times to remember the great conflict that took place during the Dark Ages, when our fathers fought for liberty of conscience and for the unfettered word of God. The well-known protest of the German princes at the Diet of Spires will well repay our careful reading and thoughtful study.*BSPC 49.1*

"There is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the Word of God. That the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; and that this holy book is in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness. We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of his only Word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testament, without adding any thing thereto that may be contrary to it. This

Word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, whilst all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.”—D’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, pp. 520, 521.*BSPC 49.2*

This is a remarkable statement. We can thank God for the courage and for the loyalty of men who took their lives in their hands when appearing before this august council. Their unflinching devotion and integrity secured for us many of the wonderful privileges we enjoy today. The day this protest was read was a great day, a red-letter day in the history of the Reformation church. The Spirit of prophecy comments as follows:*BSPC 49.3*

“The appointed time came to appear before the emperor. Charles 5., seated upon his throne, surrounded by the electors and the princes, gave audience to the Protestant Reformers. The confession of their faith was read. In that august assembly the truths of the gospel were clearly set forth, and the errors of the papal church were pointed out. Well has that day been pronounced ‘the greatest day of the Reformation, and one of the most glorious in the history of Christianity and of mankind.’”—*The Great Controversy*, 207.*BSPC 49.4*

In the light of these considerations we should certainly regard the Holy Scriptures as the divine standard in every phase of our experience. Too often the Bible is given little or no place in the regular systems of education. In turning aside from the unfailing guide God has given, men “have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” *Jeremiah 2:13*. Forsaking the Bible means leaving the light and going into darkness; it means crippling along in the quest for knowledge when we might have the aid of the Spirit of God to guide, direct, and lead our minds to hitherto unattained heights of the knowledge of the wisdom of God.*BSPC 49.5*

The Spirit of prophecy has some pertinent paragraphs on this thought:*BSPC 50.1*

“The word of God is to stand as the highest educating book in our world, and is to be treated with reverential awe.”—*Fundamentals of*

Christian Education, 384.BSPC 50.2

“The Bible stands the highest among books, and its study is valuable above the study of other literature in giving strength and expansion to the mind.... The word of God is the most perfect educational book in our world.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education, 394.BSPC 50.3*

The Study of the Bible

Quite frequently when urging the study of the Sacred Scriptures, one is met with the query, But how shall I study? This is a problem with many; they know not how to start. It seems a relatively simple matter to read the Morning Watch text, to look up the Scriptures in the Sabbath school lesson, or to read a chapter or a book of the Bible.*BSPC 50.4*

It is not such a difficult undertaking to read the Bible through, although this calls for determination and a will to succeed. But when it comes to studying the word, this is not at all easy for many. This chapter is not written with either the teacher or the college student in mind, but it is written for the ordinary members in our churches, those who are busy with the everyday duties of life, duties in the home, in the office, or in the factory. The problem to find time is quite a question in these days of rush and hurry. There are so many duties on the farm, so many things to be cared for in the little time we have, so many duties also devolving upon us as officers of the church, that there seems but little time for definitely searching the word of God. So many demands are made upon us that it is no easy task to so order our affairs that we can find time to sit down unhurriedly to study the Sacred Word of our God. Yet after all, our spiritual life and growth in grace demand that we do this. This Holy Book is food for our souls, and unless we learn day by day to feed upon God's word, we can hardly expect "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior."*BSPC 50.5*

Let us regard our time as a definite gift from God. Let us give study as to how we might fit in periods, even though brief, when we may turn aside from the day's duties and spend a short while in communion with God, with our own hearts, and with His Holy Word. Counsel from the messenger of the Lord is helpful on this point:*BSPC 51.1*

"This lifetime is too short to be squandered in vain and trifling diversion, in unprofitable visiting, in needless dressing for display, or in exciting amusements. We cannot afford to squander the time given us of God in which to bless others and in which to lay up for ourselves a treasure in heaven. We have none too much time for

the discharge of necessary duties. We should give time to the culture of our own hearts and minds in order that we may be qualified for our lifework. By neglecting these essential duties and conforming to the habits and customs of fashionable, worldly society, we do ourselves and our children a great wrong.”—*Testimonies for the Church 3:146.BSPC 51.2*

Further counsel recognizes that the time we have available may be very short, for we read:*BSPC 51.3*

“My brethren and sisters, old and young, when you have an hour of leisure, open the Bible and store the mind with its precious truths.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:588.BSPC 51.4*

In a study of the Sacred Oracles we need to remember that the Bible is its own interpreter. This needs always to be borne in mind. Concerning this we read:*BSPC 51.5*

“The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:499.BSPC 51.6*

“‘The word of God is plain in itself; and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, which is never contrary to Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places, so that there can remain no doubt but unto such as obstinately remain ignorant.’ [John Knox.]”—*The Great Controversy, 251.BSPC 51.7*

“There are truths in the word which, like veins of precious ore, are hidden beneath the surface. The hidden treasure is discovered as it is searched for, as a miner searches for gold and silver. The evidence of the truth of God’s word is in the word itself. Scripture is the key that unlocks scripture. The deep meaning of the truths of God’s word is unfolded to our minds by His Spirit.”—*Testimonies for the Church 8:157.BSPC 51.8*

Another important principle to recognize is that where there are texts that appear to be difficult, there are other texts in the Bible that will explain them. This was one of the vital points that entered into the famous protest of the princes at the Diet of Spire. In this they said:*BSPC 51.9*

“There is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the word of God; that the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts.”—D’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, pp. 520, 521. *BSPC 52.1*

Observe also further counsel from the Spirit of prophecy: *BSPC 52.2*

“By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:499*. *BSPC 52.3*

“We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture.”—*The Great Controversy*, 598. *BSPC 52.4*

These are general principles that will guide us in our approach to this, the most wonderful book in all the world. Again we remark that ours is a unique privilege, and we should seize the opportunity and endeavor to become better acquainted with this message from Heaven. Mrs. E. G. White has remarked: *BSPC 52.5*

“The privileges and opportunities which they now have of becoming intelligent in regard to the Scriptures should not be neglected. God would have those who profess to be His followers thoroughly furnished with proof of the doctrines of His word.”—*Testimonies on Sabbath School Work*, p. 108. *BSPC 52.6*

If we wish to start in earnest to study the word of God, there are several profitable avenues open to us. We would call attention to the following: *BSPC 52.7*

1. Character Study

This is always a profitable meditation. As we read the sacred pages concerning Abraham and Jacob and Moses and others of the saints of God, we shall not only learn how mightily God used them in His service but also be made acquainted with their weaknesses and with their failures. It will bring courage to us as we see how they overcame in the strength of the God of Israel, how they “waxed valiant in the fight.” *BSPC 52.8*

Mrs. E. G. White gives us an excellent paragraph in this phase of study:*BSPC 52.9*

“The lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals. From Adam down through successive generations to the times of the apostles we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred and the genuine experience of real characters.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:9.BSPC 52.10*

“Bible history stays the fainting heart with the hope of God’s mercy. We need not despair when we see that others have struggled through discouragements like our own, have fallen into temptations even as we have done, and yet have recovered their ground and been blessed of God. The words of inspiration comfort and cheer the erring soul. Although the patriarchs and apostles were subject to human frailties, yet through faith they obtained a good report, fought their battles in the strength of the Lord, and conquered gloriously. Thus may we trust in the virtue of the atoning sacrifice and be overcomers in the name of Jesus.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:15.BSPC 53.1*

In following the biographical study of the Bible one should read *Hebrews 11*, Patriarchs and Prophets, and other Spirit of prophecy works. If available, certain small books by F. B. Meyer on the lives of David, Jeremiah, Abraham, Moses, and other Biblical characters will be found helpful.*BSPC 53.2*

2. Book Study

Another beneficial line of study is the books of the Bible. One might consider one of the prophets or one of the epistles and receive much information and real spiritual help from such a meditation. This line of study gives one a view of the book as a whole; one can see the purpose of the writer, with each chapter having its bearing on the purpose and objective of the book. Each book has its message, and to read the book with a view to discovering that message is of special value to our understanding the Bible as a whole.*BSPC 53.3*

Many excellent works have been written on the various books of the

Bible, and one would of necessity have to exercise great care in choosing an author who was known for his sound Scriptural presentation. A work on book outlines will be found helpful also, and one that is inexpensive was prepared some years ago by Robert Lee and is entitled *The Outlined Bible*. This was published in London, England.*BSPC 53.4*

3. Chapter Study

If one should hesitate to take such a large assignment of study as a whole book, one could start with a chapter. Then take each chapter in succession, and thus go through an entire book. It will be found, however, that, generally speaking, these chapters are intimately related and follow in sequence, leading step by step to the writer's objective. This is not always the case. One can study a single chapter in the book of Psalms without this difficulty, and the same thing is true in a few other books of the Bible. In chapter study it is important that we discover the message of each chapter. Each verse will have its bearing on this, and we should seek to understand the development of thought in the chapter by giving special attention to each verse from the viewpoint of its relation to the other verses in the particular chapter under consideration.*BSPC 53.5*

4. Verse-by-Verse Study

The procedure in this kind of study is much the same as that indicated in the last section, but yet with a difference. Verse-by-verse study will mean giving special thought to the verses themselves, and usually this is not only an interesting but a profitable phase of study. We are told that "every verse of the Bible is a communication from God to men."—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 504*. And still further:*BSPC 54.1*

"In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view,

and no positive instruction gained.”—*Education, 189.BSPC 54.2*

We shall experience much blessing from the Lord in this method of study, and at times shall receive divine illumination as the truth of God breaks upon our vision.*BSPC 54.3*

“Familiar truths will present themselves to your mind in a new aspect; texts of Scripture will burst upon you with a new meaning, as a flash of light; you will see the relation of other truths to the work of redemption, and you will know that Christ is leading you. A divine Teacher is at your side.”—*Mount of Blessing, p. 36.BSPC 54.4*

5. Doctrinal Study

Many are the grand themes of the blessed Book of God. The plan of salvation, the redeeming work of Christ, is the transcendent message of divine revelation. This we shall never exhaust. Even in the life to come we shall constantly be studying into the wonders of redeeming grace.*BSPC 54.5*

“And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption, and the amazing achievements in The Great Controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep harps of gold. And ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.”—*The Great Controversy, 678.BSPC 55.1*

We should also give study to other doctrines, doctrines intimately related to the central theme of “Christ, and him crucified.” We should take first one doctrine and then another, following the divine principle of “here a little, and there a little.” If we take it “precept upon precept; line upon line,” we shall find that in the course of a year we have covered a good deal of ground. We should all become better acquainted with the doctrines of Holy Scripture, not only that we may know the truth ourselves, but that we may be able

to give an answer for our faith at all times. Doctrinal study is profitable, and in following it we shall be enriched in knowledge and spiritual strength.*BSPC 55.2*

6. Topical Study

This is somewhat akin to the previous section but slightly different. We would hardly call the subject of heaven a doctrine; the same would apply to a study of the new earth state. These are in a special sense topical studies. Such a study would mean looking up texts in different parts of the Bible, texts that have a bearing upon the topics under consideration. The themes for study are legion, and our own denominational books will be found helpful in the study of both doctrinal and topical themes.*BSPC 55.3*

7. Historical Study

There is quite a field for helpful meditation in the Scriptures from the historical viewpoint. One might consider the history of the Jews in Old Testament days, or the history of the same people in New Testament times. Reference in the Bible is made also to Babylon, to Egypt, to Assyria, and to other nations. Of course the material given is not complete; it was never intended to be complete, for the Bible does not set out to give the full history of nations. What is given is given particularly because of the connection of these nations with the people of God and the part they played in that relationship. There are, however, excellent and authoritative histories of these nations that can be obtained. Any such study should involve both the Holy Scriptures and the histories that have been written, and this will be informative and helpful and will enable the student to see God's purpose and plan concerning the nations of earth.*BSPC 55.4*

Encountering Difficulties

Many are surprised when they experience difficulties in their study of the Bible. Some have complained about this, and felt that the Lord should have made everything so plain that anyone could understand His word without any question whatsoever. In reasoning thus, however, such people overlook one important consideration, and that is, that if everyone could understand everything in the Sacred Scriptures, it would indicate that a mind no higher than theirs was the author of the Sacred Oracles. The fact that there are what appear to be difficulties to us, is rather one evidence of the divine authorship of the Holy Writings. The word itself bears every evidence that a divine mind was the author of the Divine Word. God's thoughts as well as His ways are far above ours. Through the prophet of old He declared:*BSPC 56.1*

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” *Isaiah 55:9.BSPC 56.2*

We read:*BSPC 56.3*

“There are many things apparently difficult or obscure which God will make plain and simple to those who thus seek an understanding of them.”—*Testimonies for the Church 5:704.BSPC 56.4*

“The word of God, like the character of its Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings. But God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority.... True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth will find ample ground for faith.”—*Education, 169.BSPC 56.5*

We can rest assured that God has revealed in His word everything essential to our salvation, and we may know also that He has permitted certain mysteries in the Holy Scriptures to test our faith and our confidence in Him.*BSPC 56.6*

Blessings From Searching the Word

It would be impossible to make the word of God the man of our counsel and not receive divine blessings into our hearts and lives. The promise of God is clear and plain. It has always been true that when men hear the voice of God, and decide to be obedient to His will, blessings flow in rich measure into their longing hearts. The revelator many centuries ago declared:*BSPC 57.1*

“Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.” *Revelation 1:1BSPC 57.2*

“Blessed are they that do his commandments.” *Revelation 22:14.BSPC 57.3*

“Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” *Verse 7.BSPC 57.4*

Here is a threefold benediction: a blessing on the reader, the hearer, and the doer of the word of God. Jesus laid particular emphasis on the same thought when He announced to the people of His day, “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” *Luke 11:28.BSPC 57.5*

But the promise of blessing goes back much further in the history of the human race. The writer of the Psalms stresses the same thing. Notice his words:*BSPC 57.6*

“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law does he meditate day and night.” *Psalms 1:1, 2.BSPC 57.7*

“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies.” *Psalms 119:2.BSPC 57.8*

Yes, even in the days of wandering in the wilderness, God promised to send from His throne in heaven copious showers of blessing upon His people if they would listen to and obey His Sacred Word.*BSPC 57.9*

“Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the Lord thy God blesses thee, as he promised thee.”
Deuteronomy 15:5, 6.BSPC 57.10

There is something about God’s Holy Word that works wonders in the hearts of those who receive it in deed and in truth. It is the “living” word of the eternal God; it is the “powerful” word of Jehovah. When we receive this into our lives, and determine by the help of God that this shall govern and control every action, then this word is the word of life and power to us. It brings new life; it brings spiritual power, and this enables us by divine grace to be “more than conquerors through him that loved us.”*BSPC 57.11*

It is the purpose of God that this Sacred Word accomplish much for us. By it we are converted (*Psalms 19:7*), we are cleansed (*John 15:3*), we are strengthened (*Psalms 119:28*), we are sanctified (*John 17:17*), and we are edified (*Acts 20:32*).*BSPC 58.1*

On our part, in receiving these inestimable blessings we are.*BSPC 58.2*

To trust God’s word. *Psalms 119:42.BSPC 58.3*

To meditate on God’s word. *Psalms 119:15.BSPC 58.4*

To rejoice in God’s word. *Psalms 119:162.BSPC 58.5*

To love God’s word. *Psalms 119:140.BSPC 58.6*

To preach God’s word. *Acts 8:4.BSPC 58.7*

To forget not God’s word. *Psalms 119:16.BSPC 58.8*

As we learn to have implicit confidence in the Bible, the door will be wide open for Heaven’s choicest benedictions to flow into our souls. These divine blessings are many, but only a few of them will be listed, with quotations from the Bible and from the Spirit of prophecy. Earnest, profitable perusal of the Holy Scriptures will*BSPC 58.9*

1. Strengthen the Mind

David, the servant of God, centuries ago testified:*BSPC 58.10*

“Through thy precepts I get understanding.” *Psalms 119:104.BSPC 58.11*

“The entrance of thy words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple.” *Verse 130.BSPC 58.12*

Confirming this we read:*BSPC 58.13*

“There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God’s word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose that is rarely seen in these times.”—*Steps to Christ, 94, 95.BSPC 58.14*

2. Strengthen the Spiritual Nature

The Lord has designed that through the Sacred Scriptures we shall receive the strength and help we need in every crisis. As we meditate upon His Holy Word we shall be “filled with the knowledge of his will”; we shall increase “in the knowledge of God”; we shall be “strengthened with all might.” (*Colossians 1:9-11.*) This Holy Word brings divine strength to the soul. The word itself is power, and as we receive it we receive with it the power of God, which will keep and preserve and save us.*BSPC 58.15*

“Even greater is the power of the Bible in the development of the spiritual nature. Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship find his real life and development.”—*Education, 124.BSPC 59.1*

3. Transform the Character

This is one of the marvelous results of the word of the Lord on human hearts. That same word that in the beginning called all

things into existence speaks in the Scriptures of truth. When we let it have its way in our lives, it will work miracles, just as it did on creation's morn. The new birth, the awakening from the death of sin to a new life in Christ Jesus, is a new creation. "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation." *2 Corinthians 5:17*, R.S.V. This word is power; it transforms the life. Receiving it into the heart, the drunkard becomes sober, the profligate becomes pure in mind. Communities given over to the grossest forms of heathenism are miraculously changed. In place of the drunken orgies and the debasing practices of superstition, there flow songs of praise to God. If we refuse to be "conformed to this world," we shall be "transformed by the renewing" of our minds. Then we shall know in deed and in truth "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." *Romans 12:2.BSPC 59.2*

This transformation in life is referred to in the Spirit of prophecy in the following words:*BSPC 59.3*

"A change wrought by the word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'"—*Education, 172.BSPC 59.4*

4. Point Out the Seriousness of the Times

All of us need not only to know but to sense the solemnity of the times in which we live. We have surely come to the very end of the last days, and we need to be awake and not sleep as do many. We are the "children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness." *1 Thessalonians 5:5*. God has given to His people the "sure word of prophecy" (*2 Peter 1:19*), and this word clearly depicts the serious and solemn scenes to be enacted in the days to come. We need to seek for grace and wisdom, that we may ever be alert, that that day does not overtake us as a thief. (See *Testimonies for the Church 5:216.*)*BSPC 59.5*

5. Fill the Soul With the Love of God

David, the king of Israel, had learned actually to "love" the word of God. Time after time he broke out in sentiments expressing the

deep conviction of his soul: “O how love I thy law”; “thy law do I love.” *Psalms 119:97, 113*. David had gladly received the life giving word into his soul; he loved it with a fervent love, and this in turn begat in his heart an even deeper love for God. This is a two-way experience. When we love God we will keep His commandments; when we receive His word “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” *BSPC 60.1*

“Take the Bible as a study book, and see if you are not filled with the love of God. Your heart may be barren, your intellect feeble; but if you will prayerfully study the word of God, light will flash into your mind.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 455, 456. *BSPC 60.2*

6. Fill the Heart With Divine Comfort

This is another of the rich blessings from Heaven given to the children of God. How the world craves for comfort today! On every hand there is much to distract, much to annoy, much to disturb our peace of mind, but, thank God, there is comfort in our heavenly Father. He is the “God of all comfort” (*2 Corinthians 1:3*), and He desires that we “through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (*Romans 15:4*). As God’s people we are to “comfort one another with these words” of consolation and help. (*1 Thessalonians 4:18*.) Our hearts will be comforted as we are established in every good word and work.” (*2 Thessalonians 2:17*.) *BSPC 60.3*

Observe the following words of admonition: *BSPC 60.4*

“In the religious life of every soul who is finally victorious, there will be scenes of terrible perplexity and trial; but his knowledge of the Scriptures will enable him to bring to mind the encouraging promises of God, which will comfort his heart and strengthen his faith in the power of the Mighty One.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 5:578. *BSPC 60.5*

7. Bring Joy and Gladness Into the Soul

True joy is heaven born; it is one of the priceless blessings Jesus

bestows upon those who accept Him as Lord and Master. His provision for us is not only that we have joy but that we have His joy. He says, "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (*John 17:13*); and "that my joy might remain in you" (*John 15:11*). He longs that our "joy might be full." Here it is our privilege to have a foretaste of that blessed experience that awaits the redeemed of which the psalmist wrote, "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." *Psalms 16:11*. It is true that in this life there will be discouragements and disappointments. We shall be tempted time and again to yield to despondency and to feel that all is hopeless. We are told:*BSPC 60.6*

"There is many a brave soul sorely pressed by temptation, almost ready to faint in the conflict with self and with the powers of evil. Do not discourage such a one in his hard struggle. Cheer him with brave, hopeful words that shall urge him on his way. Thus the light of Christ may shine from you. 'None of us lives to himself.' By our unconscious influence others may be encouraged and strengthened, or they may be discouraged, and repelled from Christ and the truth."—*Steps to Christ, 125.BSPC 61.1*

However, let us remember that even now—*BSPC 61.2*

"Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace."—*Steps to Christ, 130.BSPC 61.3*

Prayer and the Study of the Word of God

The approach to the study of the Holy Scriptures is somewhat different from the approach to the study of other books. Of course in the study of the Bible we must of necessity apply our minds, and seek to understand the meaning of words and incidents and endeavor to see the relation of one part to another. That would be but natural. But if we desire to know the truth and understand something of the Author of this wonderful compilation of writings known as the Old and the New Testament, we need to do more than approach such study merely from the mental viewpoint. As we have already seen, there is such a thing as believing with the heart, and Bible religion is definitely a heart religion. It is true the mind plays an important part, but after all, the mind is the doorway to the heart. In order therefore to understand the Divine Oracles, in order to catch the inspiration and enjoy the experience of being led step by step into the fullness of the truth of God, we must see to it that prejudice is put aside, that our sins are forgiven, and that self is submerged. When we come with an earnest prayer in our hearts that God will open up to us the treasures of His word, He will, by His Spirit, lead us into a fuller understanding of this wonderful revelation from Heaven.*BSPC 61.4*

Notice some of the counsel through the Spirit of prophecy as to how we should approach the study of the word of God.*BSPC 62.1*

1. Do It With Earnest Prayer

“The Bible should never be studied without prayer.”—*The Great Controversy*, 599.*BSPC 62.2*

“As we study the Scriptures, we should pray for the light of God’s Holy Spirit to shine upon the word, that we may see and appreciate its treasures.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 113.*BSPC 62.3*

2. Seek for the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

“Take your Bible and present yourself before your heavenly Father, saying, ‘Enlighten me; teach me what is truth.’ The Lord will regard your prayer, and the Holy Spirit will impress the truth upon your

soul.”—The Signs of the Times, May 9, 1911.*BSPC 62.4*

3. Pray That Angels May Assist Us

“They [the Bereans] ... studied the Bible, not from curiosity, but in order that they might learn what had been written concerning the promised Messiah. Daily they searched the inspired records; and as they compared scripture with scripture, heavenly angels were beside them, enlightening their minds and impressing their hearts.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 231.*BSPC 62.5*

4. Come With Surrendered Hearts

“The student of the word should not make his opinions a center around which truth is to revolve. He should not search for the purpose of finding texts of Scripture that he can construe to prove his theories; for this is wresting the Scriptures to his own destruction. The Bible student must empty himself of every prejudice, lay his own ideas at the door of investigation, and with humble, subdued heart, with self hid in Christ, with earnest prayer, he should seek wisdom from God.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 461.*BSPC 62.6*

Chapter 4—The Word of God

“The word of our God endures for ever. And this is the very word which has been preached to you.” 1 Peter 1:25, Lamsa’s translation. *BSPC 63.1*

In the first chapter of his first epistle the apostle Peter emphasizes three incorruptible things, things that are intimately related, and that have a vital bearing on our eternal salvation. In the fourth verse he points forward to the inheritance promised to the faithful children of God, and he designates this the “inheritance incorruptible.” In *verses 18, 19* he shows how it is possible to obtain the character that will fit us to dwell in the kingdom of God. This is not through any merit of our own, but through the “cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Galatians 6:14.*) We were “not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ...; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” His is the incorruptible sacrifice, which brings to us the inestimable blessings of redemption. This is the divine provision for a lost race, and the only provision whereby man can be saved. *BSPC 63.2*

As the apostle further develops the thought, he refers to that unique yet vital and wonderful change wrought in the heart of the one who yields in complete surrender to the claims of Christ the Lord. The old man dies, a new life is begun. In other words, one is “born again” or “born from above”; he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. This miracle is wrought by the implanting of the divine seed, and this, watered by the refreshing of the Holy Spirit, brings forth the “new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” *Ephesians 4:24.* This divine seed is the incorruptible word of God. *BSPC 63.3*

Hence we have the “inheritance incorruptible,” the hope set before us; we have the incorruptible redemption, the salvation of Christ Jesus which will prepare us to enter the eternal abode; and we have the incorruptible word, which, when received and obeyed, will transform our lives and work in us to “will and to do of his good pleasure.” *Philippians 2:13.* *BSPC 63.4*

This incorruptible word of our God is the center and circumference

of the everlasting gospel message God has given to the children of men. And the apostle declares, "This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." This word of God is dynamic; something happens when the word of God begins to work. This is not to be wondered at, for after all the word of God is "alive"; it is the "living" word. We read that "the word of God is quick" (*Hebrews 4:12*), the word "quick" here meaning "alive," "living," et cetera. The word is so rendered in the phrase "our fathers ... received the lively oracles" (*Acts 7:38*); and again in the expression, "I am he that lives" (*Revelation 1:18*). Yes, the word of Jehovah pulsates with life. Just as God gave to His beloved Son "to have life in himself" (*John 5:26*), so hath He decreed that His word is life, and that it "lives and abides for ever" (*1 Peter 1:23*). "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." *Psalms 119:89*. It is the word that will remain when all the ephemeral things of earth have disappeared. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." *Matthew 24:35*. Hence the word of God, the word that saves, the word of our blessed Lord, not only is a living word; it is incorruptible, and it will stand throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. *BSPC 64.1*

The Written Word of God

All through the Scriptures of truth the revelation of the Most High is called “the word of God.” It is doubtless called such because it gives the record of what God “said.” God spoke His ten-commandment law with His own voice; later He wrote it with His own finger on tables of stone. When He gave His messages to His people He spoke again, but this time through His servants the prophets; they were used as His mouthpiece to convey His solemn appeals and warnings to their hearts. These prophets in many instances committed the sacred messages to writing, and it is our privilege today to read “in the volume of the book” these divine words that “were written aforetime ... for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” *Romans 15:4.BSPC 64.2*

The term “word of God” applies not merely to one part of the Holy Bible but to every part of it. We read:*BSPC 65.1*

“The word of God includes the scriptures of the Old Testament as well as of the New. One is not complete without the other.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 126.BSPC 65.2*

In perusing the sacred pages one is impressed with the fact that much is said about this Divine Word. We might study with profit the texts in the following classifications:*BSPC 65.3*

1. What the Word of God Is Called.*BSPC 65.4*

Cross	<i>1 Corinthians 1:18</i>	Patience	<i>Revelation 3:10</i>
Exhortation	<i>Hebrews 13:22</i>	Power	<i>Hebrews 1:3</i>
Faith	<i>Romans 10:8</i>	Promise	<i>Romans 9:9</i>
Gospel	<i>Acts 15:7</i>	Prophecy	<i>2 Peter 1:19</i>
Grace	<i>Acts 20:32</i>	Reconciliation	<i>2 Corinthians 5:19</i>
Holiness	<i>Jeremiah 23:9</i>	Righteousness	<i>Hebrews 5:13</i>
Kingdom	<i>Matthew 13:19</i>	Salvation	<i>Acts 13:26</i>
Knowledge	<i>1 Corinthians 12:8</i>	Testimony	<i>Revelation 12:11</i>

Life	<i>Philippians 2:16</i>	Truth	<i>Colossians 1:5</i>
Oath	<i>Hebrews 7:28</i>	Wisdom	<i>1 Corinthians 12:8</i>

2. What the Word of God Is.*BSPC 65.5*

Engrafted	<i>James 1:21</i>	Never failing	<i>1 Kings 8:56</i>
Eternal	<i>Isaiah 40:8</i>	Powerful	<i>Hebrews 4:12</i>
Faithful	<i>Titus 1:9</i>	Pure	<i>Proverbs 30:5</i>
Living	<i>Hebrews 4:12</i>	Sure	<i>2 Peter 1:19</i>

3. What the Word of God Does.*BSPC 65.6*

Cleanses	<i>John 15:3</i>	Quickens	<i>Psalms 119:25</i>
Comforts	<i>Psalms 119:52</i>	Regenerates	<i>1 Peter 1:23</i>
Converts	<i>Psalms 19:7</i>	Sanctifies	<i>John 17:17</i>
Edifies	<i>Acts 20:32</i>	Satisfies	<i>Psalms 119:103</i>
Heals	<i>Psalms 107:20</i>	Saves from sin	<i>Psalms 119:11</i>
Illuminates	<i>Psalms 119:105</i>	Strengthens	<i>Psalms 119:28</i>
Protects	<i>Ephesians 6:17</i>	Sustains	<i>Hebrews 1:3</i>

4. What We Are to Do With the Word of God.*BSPC 65.7*

Believe	<i>John 2:22</i>	Obey	<i>1 Samuel 15:22</i>
Eat	<i>Psalms 119:103</i>	Preach	<i>Acts 8:4</i>
Forget not	<i>Psalms 119:16</i>	Receive	<i>Luke 8:13</i>
Hear	<i>Romans 10:17</i>	Rejoice in	<i>Psalms 119:162</i>
Hide	<i>Psalms 119:11</i>	Taste	<i>Hebrews 6:5</i>
Long for	<i>Psalms 119:123</i>	Trust	<i>Psalms 119:42</i>
Love	<i>Psalms 119:140</i>	Understand	<i>Psalms 119:27</i>
Meditate on	<i>Psalms 119:15</i>		

The Living Word of God

By this expression we mean “Christ the Living Word.” The written scriptures, however, “are quick and powerful”; they are alive; they live and abide forever. But in Christ Jesus our Lord this word is personified.*BSPC 66.1*

Among the many names and titles applied to the Savior of mankind, none is more significant or full of meaning than the epithet “the Word.” Jesus is called such several times in the New Testament, and in the main by the beloved apostle. This is seen in his Gospel, his Epistles, and the book of Revelation. Seven times is this so applied, but if we list also the pronouns used in connection with these references—and there are about eighteen instances of their use—they will total fully twenty-five. However, the seven specific references are as follows:*BSPC 66.2*

“In the beginning was the Word.” *John 1:1.BSPC 66.3*

“The Word was with God.” *Verse 1.BSPC 66.4*

“The Word was God.” *Verse 1.BSPC 66.5*

“The Word was made flesh.” *Verse 14.BSPC 66.6*

“The Word of life.” *1 John 1:1.BSPC 66.7*

“The Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost.” *1 John 5:7.BSPC 66.8*

“His name is called The Word of God.” *Revelation 19:13.BSPC 66.9*

There are, of course, other passages where the word is used, and that might with good reason be applied to Christ Jesus the Lord. (See *2 Peter 3:3, 7; Philippians 2:16*, et cetera.)*BSPC 66.10*

Furthermore, the term “word,” as applied to Deity, was not unknown in Old Testament days. We read concerning Elijah, in *1 Kings 19:7*, that the “angel of the Lord” came to him, but later this is referred to as the “word of the Lord” (*1 Kings 19:9*.) The same thing can be seen in the case of Moses. In Exodus the Divine Record says that the “angel of the Lord appeared unto him” (*Exodus 3:2*), but Leeser

in his notes on this verse remarks:*BSPC 66.11*

“The angel who appeared to Moses does not address him: the bodily appearance of the peculiar conflagration, was to arrest his attention; but immediately after, when Moses attempted to inspect it more closely, he is arrested by the Divine word.”*BSPC 66.12*

And this “Divine word” was none other than Christ the Lord, for He is “The Word of God” (*Revelation 19:13*); He is also the “angel of the Lord.”*BSPC 66.13*

Let us give closer study to the three uses of the epithet “Word” as applied to Jesus in the first verse of John’s Gospel. There we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*BSPC 66.14*

In this verse are emphasized some vital and important truths. Let us observe:*BSPC 67.1*

1. The Word Was in the Beginning

The word “beginning” used here is from the Greek word *arche*, and although it is rendered in several ways in the New Testament, it is the word that is used in connection with creation. It is found in *Hebrews 1:10*, where, in reference to Christ the Word, we read, “And, Thou Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth.”*BSPC 67.2*

And in referring to the first marriage in the Garden of Eden the Saviour remarked, “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” *Matthew 19:4*.*BSPC 67.3*

It is reiterated in John’s Gospel, in *John 1:2*, in the words: “The same was in the beginning with God.”*BSPC 67.4*

This expression emphasizes the eternity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Word of the everlasting God. Not only was He in the beginning; He was from before the beginning of the world. The wise man of ancient days declared, “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” *Proverbs 8:23*.*BSPC 67.5*

Leeser's translation of this text is: "From eternity was I appointed chief, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth." *BSPC 67.6*

Furthermore the Septuagint English translation gives: "He established me before time was in the beginning, before he made the earth." *BSPC 67.7*

With this agree the inspired words of the great apostle to the Gentiles when he declared concerning our blessed Lord, "He is before all things." *Colossians 1:17.BSPC 67.8*

2. He Was With God

The word "with" in the text is of greater significance than what we usually mean when we use this word. The Greek word is *pros*, and means more than merely, "with," "by or through," or even "among." It signifies, among other things, "before the face of." *BSPC 67.9*

On this we might observe the testimony of H. R. Reynolds: *BSPC 67.10*

"And the Word (Logos) was with God.... The preposition is difficult to translate; it is equivalent to 'was in relation with God,' 'stood over against,' not in space or time, but eternally and constitutionally.... In addition to the idea of proximity, there is that of 'motion towards.' ... The personality of the Logos is therefore strongly forced upon us."—*Pulpit Commentary on John 1:1.BSPC 68.1*

3. He Was God

Here the deity of the divine Son is clearly expressed. The word "God" in the Greek text is without the article, and used in this way it means the divine nature or essence. The stress is upon His essential quality rather than upon His character. Jesus then possesses the same nature, the same attributes, the same divine prerogatives as God the Father. He is, as declared by the same apostle in his epistle, "the true God, and eternal life." (*1 John 5:20.*) *BSPC 68.2*

The word in the Greek text for “Word” is logos. There are several Greek words that are rendered “Word” in our English New Testament, but two of them are vitally important; they are logos and rhema. The former is used about three hundred times, and rendered “Word” about 215 times. The latter is used on about seventy occasions, and rendered “Word” about fifty-six times. The two words differ considerably in meaning. Rhema denotes that which is spoken, that which is uttered in speech or expressed in writing; logos is the expression of thought, not so much the spoken word as the conception or idea that is conveyed by that word. So Christ is the Word of God.*BSPC 68.3*

“As the spoken word reveals the invisible thought, so the Living Word reveals the invisible God.”—*The Companion Bible on John 1:1**BSPC 68.4*

Apart from the few references to the Old Testament at the beginning of this chapter, what were the ancient records to which John had access? How did he know the truth on this question? How could he sublimate this wonderful revelation of God, that Christ was the eternal “Word” of the ever-living God? Undoubtedly John, like others in the early group of apostles, knew about the Targums of the Old Testament. They were part of their heritage as members of the Jewish congregation. The Targums, or paraphrases of the Old Testament in oral form, had been in use for centuries before the days of the early church. They were regularly referred to in the synagogues, and as a Jew, John must surely have known about them.*BSPC 68.5*

On the use of the term “Word” in the Targums, J. W. Ethridge, in the introduction to the Targums of the Pentateuch, the English translation, says:*BSPC 69.1*

“Among the momenta of the Targums there is one of such great importance to the Christian theologian, that it would be unpardonable to omit it in these brief notices. I allude to the remarkable use in them of the title, ... ‘MEMRA DA-YEYA, the Word of the Lord.’ The Aramaic term Memra, is a noun, composed with the formative M, from the root Emra, ‘to speak.’ In the numerous passages referred to, it is employed with the genitive of

the Divine Name.... answering to the New Testament epithet.”—*The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch* (1862), vol. 1, p. 14.*BSPC 69.2*

The Hebrew word Memra is used in the Targums as applied to the word of God nearly six hundred times, more than three hundred of which are classified as reasonably certain. This figure is based on an article entitled “Philo of Alexandria, and Rabbinic Theology,” Appendix II, in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by Alfred Edersheim, volume 2.*BSPC 69.3*

In this article he deals with the “Memra or Logos of Onkelos,” and lists the number of times the word is used in the Targums, not only of Onkelos but in the Jerusalem Targum and the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel. A study of the paraphrases, or Targums, on the Pentateuch is certainly interesting, illuminating, and instructive. In many places where the word “God” is used they give the epithet “Word”; they give “Word” also for the “angel” of the Lord.*BSPC 69.4*

Hence we can see that John, by divine inspiration, gathered up what had been revealed in earlier days, and in a very clear and forceful manner applied this expression to Christ the Lord in the sublime language we find in the opening verses of the Gospel that bears his name.*BSPC 69.5*

Mrs. E. G. White comments:*BSPC 69.6*

“Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, in purpose,—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34.*BSPC 69.7*

Let us then revere the name of Him who enters into the fullest counsels of the Most High, He who is the thought of God made audible, He who is the alpha and the omega, and, thank God, is also the everlasting Word of the eternal God.*BSPC 69.8*

Nature of the Word

We have already observed what the word of God is and what it does as it comes in contact with human hearts and lives, but in this section let us notice more in detail something of its eternal nature.*BSPC 70.1*

Emphasis will also be placed on something to which reference has already been made, namely, that the word of God is the life giving word. It is all alive; it is full of life; in fact, it is life. When God speaks, something takes place. When He created, it was by His word. The psalmist reminds us that “he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” *Psalm 33:9*. As soon as His word went forth from His lips, the thing mentioned in His word came into being. The thing called for was in the word, and when that word was uttered, the thing which hitherto did not exist, came into being at the uttering of the divine word. That word is still further called “the word of power.” (*Hebrews 1:1*) God spoke, and immediately that which He uttered was accomplished. This was seen during the creative week over and over again. “And God said, Let there be light.” That was the divine mandate. And what happened? Immediately the light came into being, for the record says, “And there was light.” The same thing was true of every phase of creation, “God said,” and Lo! before the gaze of the angelic hosts and the inhabitants of unfallen worlds there unfolded a marvelous sight. The stately trees, the sheep and cattle, the fish of the sea, the birds of the air—all came into being at the express word of Jehovah. What a wonderful experience this must have been! Think of the command in *Genesis 1:11*, where God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass.” Remember that up to this time there was no grass; there were no bushes, no fragrant flowers, no stately trees beautifying the earth, but God spoke. The words echoed around the earth, and before the wondering gaze of millions of angel beings and representatives from other worlds there unrolled a beautiful carpet of green. They saw the earth dotted with exquisite flowers, with bushes, with fruit; and other trees raised their stately forms all over the earth. It seemed to the vast creation, as expressed by the prophet Isaiah, that “the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (*Isaiah 55:12*), and as related by the sweet singer of Israel, “All the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord” (*Psalm 96:12, 13*).*BSPC 70.2*

It might be well to list a few features of this life-giving word of the eternal God. In this listing, reference will be made to various texts of Scripture, with short quotations from those selected.*BSPC 71.1*

1. It Is a Creative Word

“We understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”
Hebrews 11:1BSPC 71.2

“By the word of God the heavens were of old.” 2 *Peter 3:5.BSPC 71.3*

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” *Psalms 33:6.BSPC 71.4*

“He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.”
Verse 9.BSPC 71.5

“In the beginning was the Word.... All things were made by him.”
John 1:1-3.BSPC 71.6

2. It Is a Sustaining Word

“Upholding all things by the word of his power.” *Hebrews 11:3.BSPC 71.7*

“And by him [the Word] all things consist.” *Colossians 1:17.BSPC 71.8*

“That same word keeps heaven and earth, as they are now.” 2
Peter 3:7, Knox’s translation.BSPC 71.9

3. It Is a Miracle-working Word

“Jesus ... said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” “Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into your house.”
Mark 2:5, 11.BSPC 71.10

“His word was with power.... And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him....*BSPC 71.11*

“And they were all amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” *Luke 4:32-36.BSPC 71.12*

4. It Is a Delivering Word

“The Lord thy God [word] is he which goes over before thee.” *Deuteronomy 9:3.BSPC 71.13*

“Then will the Lord [word] drive out all these nations from before you.” *Deuteronomy 11:23.BSPC 71.14*

“The Lord thy God [word] is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” *Deuteronomy 20:1.BSPC 71.15*

“He sent his word.... and delivered them from their destruction.” *Psalms 107:20.BSPC 71.16*

5. It Is a Healing Word

“But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” *Matthew 8:8.BSPC 71.17*

“As soon as he [Jesus] had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed.” *Mark 1:42.BSPC 71.18*

“He sent his word, and healed them.” *Psalms 107:20.BSPC 72.1*

“I am the Lord [word] that heals thee.” *Exodus 15:26.BSPC 72.2*

6. It Is a Rest-giving Word

“And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.... And there was a great calm.” *Mark 4:39.BSPC 72.3*

“He will speak peace unto his people.” *Psalms 85:8.BSPC 72.4*

“My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” *John 14:27.BSPC 72.5*

“By returning and resting shall you be saved, in keeping quiet and

trusting shall be your strength.” *Isaiah 30:15*, Rotherham’s translation.*BSPC 72.6*

7. It Is a Saving Word

“To you is the word of this salvation sent.” *Acts 13:26.BSPC 72.7*

“Being born again ... by the word of God.” *1 Peter 1:23.BSPC 72.8*

“The engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” *James 1:21.BSPC 72.9*

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” *John 17:17.BSPC 72.10*

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” *Psalms 119:11.BSPC 72.11*

And let it ever be remembered that “this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” *1 Peter 1:25*. As the apostle Paul declared at Corinth, “To you is the word of this salvation sent.” *Acts 13:26*. This is the word of power; this is the regenerating word of our God. This word, when received into the heart, brings new life from above, transforms the soul, imparts divine power to overcome sin and to keep us from sinning against God. This is the word spoken of by the prophet Isaiah centuries ago:*BSPC 72.12*

“So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” *Isaiah 55:11.BSPC 72.13*

The Lord God of heaven has sent forth His word in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord; it has come to us in the gospel of His Son. We have the story of it in the Old and the New Testament. It has come to you in these sacred pages. Have you received it? Have you made this word your own? Is it effectually working in your heart?*BSPC 72.14*

“The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every

command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature, and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”—*Education, 126.BSPC 72.15*

“In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons, 38.BSPC 73.1*

The power of the Creator, as manifested in bringing the world into being and sustaining it in its orderly path around the sun, is available to us today in the word of God. This is the power that heals the soul as well as the body. It brings deliverance; it makes a way when, humanly speaking, there is no way. This power is ours today as we surrender our hearts to God.*BSPC 73.2*

“The same power that Christ exercised when He walked visibly among men is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken to all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ....*BSPC 73.3*

“So with all the promises of God’s word. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice. It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power.”—*The Ministry of Healing, 122.BSPC 73.4*

In the original 1578 edition of the Geneva Bible will be found the following lines on the first page:*BSPC 73.5*

“Here is the spring where waters flow
To quench our heat of sin;
Here is the tree where truth does grow,
To lead our lives therein.
Here is the judge that stints the strife
When men’s devices fail;
Here is the bread that feeds the life,

That death cannot assail.”

Let us remember in our witness for God, that such witness, whether spoken publicly or privately, is, as Bernard Manning remarked, “a manifestation of the Incarnate Word, from the Written Word, by the spoken word.” *BSPC 73.6*

Partaking of the Word of God

There is a rich experience awaiting every true believer in Jesus, and that is to enter into the enjoyment of partaking of the nutriment of the word of God. The divine seed, the word, was implanted when we received Christ Jesus the Lord; now we are to grow up into Him. But we grow up into Him when we partake continually of the same Sacred Word that was instrumental in our being born again. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him.” *Colossians 2:6.BSPC 73.7*

This is our privilege, but it is also our duty to grow in the knowledge of the truth and to grow up “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” *Ephesians 4:13.BSPC 74.1*

We are invited also to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” *Psalms 34:8*. When we began to serve Jesus we received the “milk of the word” (*1 Peter 2:2*); now, as we grow, we take more solid nourishment. In the language of the apostle, we begin to partake of “strong meat.” This belongs to all who grow in Christian grace and experience.*BSPC 74.2*

Frequently in the word of God we find spiritual things likened to some of the foods that grace our own tables. It is likened to “bread” (*John 6:48, 58*), “food” (*Job 23:12*), “honey” (*Revelation 10:9*), and the psalmist, referring to the delight which came to his own soul in partaking of the delectable things of the Divine Word, remarks:*BSPC 74.3*

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” *Psalms 119:103.BSPC 74.4*

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” *Psalms 19:10.BSPC 74.5*

Of this Sacred Word we are to partake, and as it is received into the soul, we shall grow in spiritual strength and find victory over sin day by day. We read:*BSPC 74.6*

“If you would live the true Christian life, the conscience must be

quickened by constant contact with the word of God. All the precious things which at infinite cost God has provided for us will do us no good; they cannot strengthen us and produce spiritual growth unless we appropriate them. We must eat the word of God,—make it a part of ourselves.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 7:195.BSPC 74.7

“They [the followers of Christ] must receive and assimilate the word of God so that it shall become the motive power of life and action.... They must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, or there is no life in them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 278.BSPC 74.8

Time and again God counsels His people to enter fully into this experience. The shepherds of the flock must “feed my sheep” (*John* 21:17); they must also “feed my lambs” (*verse* 15). The “sheep of his pasture” taste “the good word of God” (*Hebrews* 6:5), they will prove the goodness and mercy of God. Jeremiah of old knew by practical experience what this meant, for he declared:BSPC 74.9

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.” *Jeremiah* 15:16.BSPC 75.1

Jesus also in His lessons, not only to the members of the apostolic band, but to the Pharisees who heard Him, brought the same spiritual truths to their hearts. It took a long time for them to grasp the significance of His words. Jesus said:BSPC 75.2

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.... Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Who so eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, bath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” *John* 6:51-54.BSPC 75.3

This was strange doctrine, and the Jews standing around raised the query: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” *Verse* 52. Even the disciples complained and murmured, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” *Verse* 60.BSPC 75.4

The problem in their minds was so acute that “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” *Verse 66.BSPC 75.5*

Truly, this was strange doctrine, but it was sound doctrine, a teaching that every Christian must know and experience. We partake of Christ when we partake of His word, for Jesus Himself said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” *Verse 63.BSPC 75.6*

An interesting illustration is seen in the life of David. On one occasion his life and that of his men were in jeopardy. In the crisis, David experienced a real longing for water from a well by the city of Bethlehem. He expressed this desire in the hearing of some of his mighty men. Three of them, without David’s knowledge, slipped away from the company, and much to David’s astonishment brought him the water he desired. When he saw it, however, he would not drink it, for he said:*BSPC 75.7*

“Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.” *2 Samuel 23:17.BSPC 75.8*

Another record gives this wording:*BSPC 76.1*

“My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? For with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it.” *1 Chronicles 11:19.BSPC 76.2*

Obviously had David partaken of this water he would, as he mentions, have partaken of the blood of his men. That water had been secured at the risk of their lives. They might easily have been slain. It was a miracle they had come back alive, and David knew it. These men had been willing to sacrifice their lives for their master, so David refused to drink of the water, because that water represented the blood of these men. In like manner does the word of God in the Scriptures of truth represent the sacred and precious blood of the Son of God. If we partake of the one, we partake of the other. We are told:*BSPC 76.3*

“It is through the word that Christ abides in His followers. This is the same vital union that is represented by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The words of Christ are spirit and life. Receiving them, you receive the life of the Vine.... Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, 677.BSPC 76.4

“As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God’s word for Himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the word for ourselves.”—*The Desire of Ages*, 390.BSPC 76.5

The following texts might be found helpful in a further study of this vital phase of Christian experience:BSPC 76.6

Now we can be partakers of—BSPC 76.7

The divine nature	<i>2 Peter 1:4</i>
Christ	<i>Hebrews 3:14</i>
His promise	<i>Ephesians 3:6</i>
The Holy Spirit	<i>Hebrews 6:4</i>
The living bread	<i>1 Corinthians 10:17</i>
His holiness	<i>Hebrews 12:10</i>
Spiritual things	<i>Romans 15:27</i>
Heavenly things	<i>Hebrews 3:1</i>
Chastisement	<i>Hebrews 12:8</i>
Sufferings	<i>2 Corinthians 1:7</i>

THEN we, shall be partakers of—BSPC 77.1

The inheritance of the saints in light	<i>Colossians 1:12</i>
His glory	<i>1 Peter 5:1</i>

As we thus receive the word of our God into our souls, Christ will abide in us day by day. We shall then experience that intimate fellowship with Jesus, that the “word of Christ” may dwell “in you richly in all wisdom” (*Colossians 3:16*); then Christ Himself will dwell

in our lives. And we shall know in a fuller and in a richer measure that the gospel is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (*Colossians 1:27*), and shall be enabled to say with the apostle Paul:*BSPC 77.2*

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
Galatians 2:20.BSPC 77.3

Part Two

Chapter 5—The Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts

The church of Christ should ever be grateful for the revelation God has given in His Holy Word. This is her chart and compass; it is her guide in the uncertain paths of life. It is here she finds her message to preach to lost men, the message that is to go to the whole world in power and great glory.*BSPC 78.1*

The Bible as we know it has been complete for nearly two thousand years; no further writings have been added to the sacred collection. It hardly seems probable that any additions will ever be made to this compilation of sacred books. This Holy Bible is, in God's providence, the supreme standard of doctrine and the guide and director in all our relationships and experiences.*BSPC 78.2*

One should not entertain the idea, however, that in closing the sacred canon of Scripture, God thereby meant that all communication from Heaven to men would cease. His plan was far from that. Jesus made this clear in His conversations with His disciples during the closing days of His ministry on earth. He told them that although He was going away, He would send someone to take His place, someone who would represent Him, His vicegerent; in other words, He would send the Comforter, or the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "He dwells with you, and shall be in you." *John 14:17*. Then the Divine Record reads, "When he ascended up on high, he ... gave gifts unto men." *Ephesians 4:8*. These gifts were the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and were more particularly outlined by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth.*BSPC 78.3*

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*BSPC 78.4*

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. To another

the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits. To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." *1 Corinthians 12:4-11.BSPC 79.1*

The Holy Spirit referred to in these verses was the same that inspired the prophets of old, for it was "the Spirit of Christ which was in them." *1 Peter 1:11.BSPC 79.2*

God reveals Himself by the Holy Spirit in and through the Scriptures of truth, and He reveals Himself also to the church through the gifts of the Spirit. These two methods of communication are part of the divine plan and purpose. The Bible does not take the place of the gifts; neither do the gifts take the place of the Bible. Both are necessary to the well-being, to the spiritual growth and development, and to the final triumph of the church of Christ. One who accepts fully the inspiration and authority of the word of God, accepts naturally the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit, because the teaching concerning these things is an integral part of the Inspired Word of truth.*BSPC 79.3*

This was well expressed by J. N. Andrews many years ago, and the following statement from the Review and Herald is worthy of our thoughtful study:*BSPC 79.4*

"1. We understand that the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, and that they contain the truth of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation.*BSPC 79.5*

"2. But we do not understand that the gift of the Scriptures to mankind supersedes the gift of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.*BSPC 79.6*

"3. On the contrary, we do believe that the Scriptures plainly reveal the office and work of the Holy Spirit; which office and work can never cease while man remains upon probation.*BSPC 79.7*

"4. This work of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the Bible doctrine of spiritual gifts.*BSPC 79.8*

“5. While therefore we do heartily accept the Scriptures as teaching man’s whole duty toward God, we do not deny the Holy Spirit that place in the church which the Scriptures assign to it....*BSPC 79.9*

“9. Now it is plain that those who reject the work of the Spirit of God under the plea that the Scriptures are sufficient, do deny and reject all that part of the Bible which reveals the office and work of the Holy Spirit.*BSPC 79.10*

10. Thus *1 Corinthians 12*, and *Ephesians 4*, which define the gifts of the Spirit of God, cannot really form a part of the rule of life of those who affirm that the Scriptures are so sufficient in themselves that the gifts of the Spirit are unnecessary....*BSPC 79.11*

“13. Now the Bible expressly teaches that the existence of these gifts is as necessary to the church of Christ, as the different members are necessary to the well-being of the body. While, therefore, the Bible recognizes the gifts of the Spirit, these are not given to supersede the Bible, nor yet to fill the same place as the Bible.*BSPC 80.1*

“14. The object of spiritual gifts is to maintain the living work of God in the church. They enable the Spirit of God to speak in the correction of wrongs, and in the exposure of iniquity. They are the means whereby God teaches His people when they are in danger of taking wrong steps. They are the means by which the Spirit of God sheds light upon church difficulties, when otherwise their adjustment would be impossible. They also constitute the means whereby God preserves His people from confusion by pointing out errors, by correcting false interpretations of the Scriptures, and causing light to shine out upon that which is in danger of being wrongly understood. And therefore of being the cause of evil and division to the people of God. In short, their work is to unite the people of God in the same mind and in the same judgment upon the meaning of the Scriptures.... It would be sad indeed if God could not still converse with His people.”—February 15, 1870.*BSPC 80.2*

Not only does the Spirit of prophecy belong to New Testament days; it was manifested over and over again in the experience of the patriarchs and the prophets of olden days. The prophet Joel actually looked forward to the time when God would pour out His

Spirit in much larger measure upon the church. We read:*BSPC 80.3*

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” *Joel 2:28, 29.BSPC 80.4*

That this is a prophecy of the last days is evident from the verses that follow the foregoing quotation. After the pouring out of the Spirit, signs are to be seen in the heavens “before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” *Verse 31*. At that time urgent appeals will be made to the hearts of men to prepare for the coming of Christ. The deliverance offered and the message that will be given, will be through “the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” *Verse 32*. Consequently, the prophecy applies to the closing up of God’s work on earth. It is the time when the remnant of the church will be looking for the coming of our blessed Lord.*BSPC 80.5*

There was a partial fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, however, on the day of Pentecost. This can be observed in the story as given by Luke. We read the following:*BSPC 81.1*

“This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” *Acts 2:16-18.BSPC 81.2*

But though the apostles recognized a fulfillment of this prophecy on the day of Pentecost, there will be a larger fulfillment in the last days. What happened at Pentecost was the former rain; that which is due now is the latter rain. The prophecy of Joel is of wider application than the experience at Pentecost. In the days of the early apostles God took some of the great reservoir of power and poured this out in mighty measure on that never-to-be-forgotten day. But the great remainder God reserves until the last days. Then the latter rain will fall, and in copious, abundant showers, in the finishing of the work of God. Observe the following from the Spirit of

prophecy:*BSPC 81.3*

“The work will be similar to that of the day of Pentecost.... The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening.”—*The Great Controversy*, 611.*BSPC 81.4*

Channels of Communication

Before sin entered our fair world God communicated face to face with our first parents. We read that “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” *Genesis 3:8*. We are told:*BSPC 81.5*

“Once, man walked with God in Eden. With open face he beheld the glory of the Lord, and talked with God, and Christ, and angels, in Paradise, without a dimming veil between. Man fell from his moral rectitude and innocence, and was driven from the garden, from the tree of life, and from the visible presence of the Lord and His holy angels.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy 1:7.BSPC 81.6*

But sin came, and man was compelled to leave his beautiful Eden home. He could no longer talk with his Maker face to face as he had done hitherto. Sin raised a barrier between man and his God. Now the only way for man to communicate with God, and God with man, was through a mediator. God chooses various ministries through whom to converse with man. Several are referred to in the first two books of the Sacred Record. Notice some of these avenues of communication:*BSPC 81.7*

Through priests *Genesis 14:18BSPC 82.1*

Through elders *Exodus 3:16BSPC 82.2*

Through angels *Genesis 16:7BSPC 82.3*

Through ministers *Exodus 24:13BSPC 82.4*

Through prophets *Genesis 20:7BSPC 82.5*

These texts in each instance give the first reference in the Bible to the particular ministry mentioned.*BSPC 82.6*

Names Given to the Prophet of God

Various names were given to those chosen by the Lord to reveal His will to the children of men. They were known by such names as:*BSPC 82.7*

Prophet	<i>1 Samuel 9:9</i>	Fellow servant	<i>Revelation 19:10; 22:9</i>
Son of man	<i>Ezekiel 4:1; 5:1</i>	Servant of God	<i>1 Chronicles 6:49</i>
Seer	<i>2 Chronicles 16:7</i>	Man of God	<i>1 Samuel 9:6; 2 Peter 1:21</i>
Messenger	<i>Isaiah 44:26; Malachi 3:1</i>		
Spokesman	<i>Exodus 4:16; 7:2</i>	Watchman	<i>Isaiah 52:8</i>

These names indicate something of the wide coverage of responsibility and experience of the one upon whom the prophetic gift is bestowed. As a prophet he was a “servant of God,” a “messenger” for God. This called for full surrender to God, so much so that he could be called a “man of God.” Even though he was thus highly honored, he was still to maintain sympathetic contact with men; hence, he was known as a “Son of man,” or “fellow servant.” God would reveal Himself to His servants in visions, and so the prophet was known as a “seer.” What he received from God he was to give to others; hence, the Scriptures designate him as a “spokesman.” In his capacity as a shepherd, one who would point out the dangers and perils of the way, he was called a “watchman.”*BSPC 82.8*

In the Days of the Patriarchs

Abraham had the distinction of being the first person to whom the name prophet was given. (*Genesis 20:7*.) It is interesting in this connection to observe the duty that fell to him as mentioned in this verse. The first recorded act of a prophet of God is as an intercessor. God told Abimelech, “He shall pray for thee.” Moffatt renders this expression, “He will intercede for you.” Hence the prophet not only conveys God’s message to man but at times conveys man’s longing desires to God.*BSPC 82.9*

“He [God] communicated His will to Abraham, and gave him a distinct knowledge of the requirements of His law, and of the salvation that would be accomplished through Christ.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 125.BSPC 83.1*

“The psalmist refers to this chapter [see *Genesis 20*] in Abraham’s experience when he says, in speaking of the chosen people, that God ‘reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 131.BSPC 83.2*

Not only Abraham had the Spirit of prophecy; several other of the patriarchs were also used of the Lord as channels of communication of the divine will. We might think of:*BSPC 83.3*

Enoch, who “prophesied” (*Jude 14*), for he had “the spirit of prophecy.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 85.BSPC 83.4*

Jacob, to whom God spoke “in the visions of the night.” (*Genesis 46:2*.) We read also that “the Spirit of inspiration rested upon him” in the prophetic vision.—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 235*. The Pulpit Commentary, volume 1, page 532, mentions that “Jacob was not only a patriarch, but a prophet.”*BSPC 83.5*

Moses, who was a prophet (*Deuteronomy 18:15, 18*) and also a lawgiver, a great leader, and a wise legislator.*BSPC 83.6*

Aaron, who is designated as a prophet in *Exodus 7:1*, but as a spokesman in *Exodus 4:16*.*BSPC 83.7*

Joseph, who had the spirit of inspiration. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 210.) Referring to Joseph, “Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” *Genesis 41:38*. The rendering of the Targums on this verse is interesting, for the part in question reads, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the spirit of prophecy?”—*Targums on Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, p. 131.*BSPC 83.8*

Joshua, concerning whom we read in the Targums that when he was called to the leadership of Israel he was “a man in whom is the spirit of prophecy.”—*Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 317.*BSPC 83.9*

Samuel, whose story is well known. It will be easy to recall that God gave him a vision as a youth in the temple of old. (*1 Samuel 3:15*.) At that time “there was no open vision.” (*Verse 1*.) But Samuel had a night vision. Samuel grew in stature. He grew in spiritual strength, and in later years “Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” *Verse 20*.*BSPC 83.10*

David, who was not only the “patriarch David” but also a “prophet.” (*Acts 2:29, 30*.)*BSPC 83.11*

In the Days of the Israelites

Many were the prophets God sent to His ancient people. There was a long line of faithful messengers and watchmen who kept alive the knowledge of God and who sought to lead God's children out of bondage into liberty, away from the sordid things of earth to the bright contemplation of things divine.*BSPC 84.1*

The prophetic ministry was rather wide in its scope. We see Moses and Joshua primarily as statesmen, and yet they were prophets of the Lord. We see Gad and Heman, who might be called prophets of the court, for one was "David's seer" (2 *Samuel* 24:11) and the other was "the king's seer" (1 *Chronicles* 25:5). There were others like Samuel who in the main were teachers of the people.*BSPC 84.2*

One of the vital aspects of the work of the prophet of the Most High was that of communicating to men the message received by inspiration from God. Note the following from the Spirit of prophecy:*BSPC 84.3*

"From the earliest times, prophets had been recognized as teachers divinely appointed. In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God. But the name was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God."—*Education*, 46.*BSPC 84.4*

The work of the prophet must at times have been very discouraging. Members of the church, and sometimes those called to bear responsibilities, either misunderstood the message that was given or, because of some secret sin or unholy desire, neglected or rejected the solemn warning. God's long-suffering and patience with His people is seen in page after page in the Old Testament writings. In the history of the kings and in Jeremiah's prophecy we read:*BSPC 84.5*

"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place." 2 *Chronicles* 36:15.*BSPC 84.6*

"I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not." *Jeremiah 7:13.BSPC 84.7*

"Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them." *Verse 25.BSPC 84.8*

And so the story goes on. Over and over again we read such words. Entreaties like the above can be found in other parts of the prophetic word. (See *Jeremiah 11:7; 25:3, 4; 26:5; 9:19; 32:33; 35:14, 15; 44:4.*)*BSPC 84.9*

We feel grieved as we read of the selfishness, the avarice, and the wickedness of men's hearts. It pains us to see their base ingratitude toward God, how they despised His message and even persecuted His messengers. Yet Israel in the days of the Savior did the same thing. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." *John 1:11.BSPC 85.1*

The attitude of the Jewish leaders, the religious prejudice, and the bitterness they manifested toward the Son of God led Jesus, near the close of His ministry, to say:*BSPC 85.2*

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." *Luke 13:34, 35.BSPC 85.3*

This is history. There is a danger that we merely read it, and express the sadness we feel at the attitude of people of bygone days. But what is our attitude toward the counsel that comes to us today through the Spirit of prophecy?*BSPC 85.4*

In the Apostolic Church

The apostolic church also witnessed to a large degree the manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Savior, was a prophet. (*Luke 1:76; 7:28.*) Jesus Himself was a prophet. (*Matthew 21:11; Luke 7:16.*) After all, it was but natural that the gift should be revived as the time came for the Messiah to appear. At the birth of the Savior and of John the Baptist we find the revival of that gift; for both Anna and Elisabeth, as well as Simeon and Zacharias, gave evidence of definite inspiration from God in the prophetic gift. Peter Lange comments as follows:*BSPC 85.5*

“If the spirit of prophecy had departed from Israel since the time of Malachi, according to the opinion of the Jews, the return of the Spirit might be looked upon as one of the tokens of the Messiah’s advent.”—*Commentary on the Holy Scriptures on Luke 2:26.BSPC 85.6*

After the ascension of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, divine gifts were manifested in the church. Among them was the gift of prophecy, and several members of the apostolic band, as well as others, received this special gift from the hands of the Lord.*BSPC 85.7*

John, the beloved disciple, had this gift bestowed in abundant measure, especially while on the Isle of Patmos. There amid the barren hills and ragged rocks he was privileged to see into heaven and to hear the divine messages of counsel for the church of God. He belonged to the noble order of the Lord’s holy prophets. (*Revelation 22:9.*) In the opening chapter of the Apocalypse he says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” One of the English translations gives the wording of this text, “I was in the Spirit of prophecy on the Lord’s day.”*BSPC 86.1*

Concerning Peter we are told that “looking down through the ages to the close of time, Peter was inspired to outline conditions that would exist in the world just prior to the second coming of Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 535.BSPC 86.2*

Paul, who became such a stalwart in the service of Christ, was

endowed with many spiritual gifts; among them was the gift of prophecy. (2 *Corinthians* 11:5; 12:13; 1 *Corinthians* 14:18.) In his letter to the church at Corinth he reminds the believers that he had received many “visions and revelations of the Lord.” (2 *Corinthians* 12:1.) These were of frequent occurrence, for he mentions having received an “abundance of the revelations.” (*Verse* 7.) When away in Arabia for three years (*Galatians* 1:17, 18) he was evidently given a number of direct communications from Heaven, not only concerning doctrine, but also regarding the future of the church. As to the truths he taught, he emphasized that they were revealed to him “by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (*Galatians* 1:12), and that “by revelation he [God] made known unto me the mystery” (*Ephesians* 3:3). *BSPC* 86.3

“Paul could not tell all that he had seen in vision; for among his hearers were some who would have misapplied his words. But that which was revealed to him enabled him to labor as a leader and a wise teacher, and also moulded the messages that he in later years sent to the churches. The impression that he received when in vision was ever with him, enabling him to give a correct representation of Christian character. By word of mouth and by letter he bore a message that ever since has brought help and strength to the church of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 469, 470. *BSPC* 86.4

We read of Judas and Silas, two leaders of the apostolic church, that they also had the prophetic gift. (*Acts* 15:32.) Concerning them the Spirit of prophecy remarks: *BSPC* 86.5

“In Antioch, the church was favored with the presence of Judas and Silas, the special messengers who had returned with the apostles from the meeting in Jerusalem. ‘Being prophets also themselves,’ Judas and Silas ‘exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.’ These godly men tarried in Antioch for a time. ‘Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.’”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 197. *BSPC* 87.1

Antioch, it seems, was blessed with a number of brethren who possessed the gift of prophecy. We read of Lucius, Barnabas, and

Simeon in *Acts 13A*. Other names are mentioned in this verse, but Robertson, in his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, says that the construction in the original language leads to the conclusion that it was these three that possessed the gift of prophecy.*BSPC 87.2*

Agabus also exercised the prophetic gift on certain occasions, as we see in *Acts 11:27, 28; 21:10*. Concerning him Matthew Henry, in his commentary, writes:*BSPC 87.3*

“A particular prediction of a famine approaching, delivered by one of these prophets, his name Agabus; we read of him again, prophesying Paul’s imprisonment, *ch 21:10*. Here he stood up ... and prophesied.... What he said was not of himself ... but he signified it by the Spirit, the spirit of prophecy.”—*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, on Acts, vol. 3, p. 580.*BSPC 87.4*

Besides these there were certain women on whom this gift was bestowed. These, however, will be referred to in detail in the next chapter.*BSPC 87.5*

The Human Body a Symbol of the Church

The Lord has illustrated the activities and relationships of His church by many symbols or figures. She is an army on the march, with Christ as the captain of her salvation (*2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Timothy 1:18; Hebrews 2:10*). She is a temple, the stones of which are the members, with Christ as the chief cornerstone (*1 Peter 2:5, 6*); she is a flock, the members of which are the “sheep of his pasture,” with Christ as the good shepherd (*Luke 12:32; John 10:11*). Again we have the figure of the vine, the branches of which represent the members of the body of Christ, Christ Himself being the vine stock. (*John 15:1-5*.) There is also the figure of the human body, which beautifully illustrates the relationship of one member to the other. None can be independent of the other; each member is needed in order that the human body might function to the highest point of efficiency.*BSPC 87.6*

Christ “is the head of the body, the church.” *Colossians 1:18*. God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.” *Ephesians 1:22, 23*. This body of Christ, like the human body, has many members. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” *1 Corinthians 12:12*.*BSPC 88.1*

As there are hands in the human body, so are there hands in the church. The same is true of other members, such as the ear, the eye, the foot, etcetera. Each has its place in the church of God, and each gift is dependent the one on the other.*BSPC 88.2*

Commenting on *1 Corinthians 12:14-22*, the Spirit of prophecy remarks:*BSPC 88.3*

“In this body there are various members, and one member cannot perform exactly the same office as another. The eyes are made for seeing, and in no case can they perform the work of the ears, which is that of hearing; neither can the ears take the place of the mouth, nor the mouth perform the office of the nose. Yet all these organs are necessary to the perfect whole and work in beautiful harmony with one another.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:128*.*BSPC 88.4*

In ancient days, as we have already seen, the term “seer” was used

for a prophet of God. The Hebrew word rendered “seer” means “to see,” and suggests a man who sees in vision. It would indicate that the prophet was one whose gaze pierces the veil that hides the whole world of the future from our eyes. In vision the prophet obtains from the Most High an inner knowledge of the realities of things present and things to come. The seer then is a “see-er,” one who sees. That after all is what the eyes are to the body. If, then, in the church the hands of the body represent the workers. The feet, those who carry the gospel message both at home and in distant lands; the mouth. Those who minister the word and bear witness for Christ Jesus the Lord; the ears, those who listen to the sacred truth of God, is it not reasonable to conclude that the eyes represent the seers, or the prophets?*BSPC 88.5*

Hence we conclude that spiritual gifts will play a large part in the purpose of God in the development of His people. Furthermore, these divine bestowments will continue to be given, and will continue to function in the church until Christ’s ideal for His children is reached. This means the grand culmination, the time when the Savior shall return to gather those in whose hearts the likeness of Christ is seen. Indeed, the Scripture evidence presented would so indicate.*BSPC 88.6*

“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: ... and he will show you things to come.” *John 16:13.BSPC 89.1*

“Scripture plainly teaches that these promises, so far from being limited to apostolic days, extend to the church of Christ in all ages.”—*The Great Controversy*, Introduction, P. viii.*BSPC 89.2*

In the Days of the Remnant

The Holy Scriptures quite frequently make reference to the remnant of the church. Not only the writers of the New Testament but the prophets of the Old Testament refer to the church of the last days. In the main they call it the remnant of the people of God. In the Holy Scriptures we find listed a number of important characteristics of those who are waiting for the return of the Savior, and among them is the possession of “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” In *Revelation 19:10* John calls this “the spirit of prophecy.” If this refers to one of the gifts of the Spirit, of which prophecy was one (*1 Corinthians 12:10*), it indicates that spiritual gifts would be seen in the church in the last days.*BSPC 89.3*

We should expect to see the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in the remnant church in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. The church in the last days is the particular part of the church to which his prophecy in the fullest sense applies. In this time God will pour out His Spirit, and under the latter rain “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” *Joel 2:28.BSPC 89.4*

The apostle Paul also refers to a special experience of the remnant church in his letter to the Corinthian believers. He writes:*BSPC 89.5*

“That in every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that you come behind in no gift. Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” *1 Corinthians 1:5-8.BSPC 89.6*

This is the message to the church “waiting for the coming of our Lord.” They are to “come behind in no gift,” and the “testimony of Christ” will be confirmed in them. One gathers from these expressions that before the end there will be a great revival in the church, the Spirit of God will be manifested in fuller measure, and this will bring a large manifestation of spiritual gifts. Why should we not expect this? Why should we not earnestly pray for this revival? This is the time of the latter rain, and in this time we are counseled

by the prophet Zechariah:*BSPC 89.7*

“Ask you of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.” *Zechariah 10:1.BSPC 90.1*

Let us bear in mind the message of faith and courage given to the people of God in the days of old. Jehoshaphat was king. Israel was facing a crisis. The enemies of the Lord were on every side, and it seemed as though there was no way out of the dilemma. Then came a prophet of the Lord. He gave counsel, which, from the military viewpoint, looked like sheer folly. Jehoshaphat was counseled to organize a choir, then to send the singers out before the hosts of Israel. They were to sing and to shout. Then said the prophet, “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand you still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” *2 Chronicles 20:17*. Jehoshaphat decided to heed this message, even though it meant going against his own best judgment. He took counsel like a good loyal leader, and the Lord honored his faith and confidence. His faith is still further seen in the fact that before Victory was in sight Jehoshaphat, with a courage born of heaven encouraged the hosts of Israel when he declared, “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall you prosper.” *Verse 20.BSPC 90.2*

These messages from the days of long ago are of special importance to us who live in the last days.*BSPC 90.3*

“Of special value to God’s church on earth today the keepers of His vineyard—are the messages of counsel and admonition given through the prophets who have made plain His eternal purpose in behalf of mankind. In the teachings of the prophets, His love for the lost race, and His plan for their salvation, are clearly revealed.”—*Prophets and Kings, 22.BSPC 90.4*

Chapter 6—The Prophetic Gift

In studying the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one needs to bear in mind continually the place of the fruit of the Spirit in the plan of God. This is vital, for after all, the fruit is the acid test of a Christian experience. Man may make a profession, but if the life is not in harmony with it, that profession becomes null and void. The Pharisees in the days of Jesus made great pretensions to holiness, but Jesus, who could read the hearts of men, and who knew that what they had was mere outward show, declared, “Ye are like unto whited sepulchres.” *Matthew 23:27*. “Wherefore,” said the Savior, “by their fruits you shall know them.” *Matthew 7:20.BSPC 91.1*

This lesson Jesus sought to impress upon His disciples when He taught them the figure of the vine and its branches. True religion is not made up of exteriors; it is something within; it pertains to the heart. It is not “the outward adorning,” but “the hidden man of the heart.” It is this which “in the sight of God [is] of great price.” *1 Peter 3:4, 5.BSPC 91.2*

The New Testament record emphasizes the thought that “the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (*Ephesians 5:9*); that “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace” (*James 3:18*). Again we read:*BSPC 91.3*

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” *Galatians 5:22, 23.BSPC 91.4*

This fruit God longs to see in the lives of His followers. It is this that will recommend the religion of Christ Jesus to men. The fruit of the Spirit can be summed up in the word “love.” This is to be manifested in the lives of the children of God. We read further:*BSPC 91.5*

“A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.” *John 13:34, 35.BSPC 91.6*

It is to such, to those who are surrendered to Christ Jesus, to those

in whose hearts the Spirit of God dwells, that the Lord delights to manifest the gifts of His Holy Spirit.*BSPC 92.1*

God Distributes the Gifts

However, the fruit of the Spirit is the heritage of every true believer in Jesus, but the gifts of the Spirit are different. It is true, the fruit is begotten in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; such does not develop from any effort of our own. Such fruit belongs to every Christian; every child of God must reveal in his heart and life the fruit of righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. This is begotten by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." *Philippians 2:13.BSPC 92.2*

The gifts of the Spirit come also from God, but in this case He distributes them according to His own good will and pleasure. He may choose a person to whom He gives one or more gifts, but to another individual in the church He may give other and different gifts. Not all have the same gifts. We may pray earnestly for specific gifts, but it is God who decides what gifts will be bestowed upon His waiting children.*BSPC 92.3*

This is made plain in the Scriptures of truth. Emphasis is laid on the fact that "God hath set some in the church" (*1 Corinthians 12:28*); that God hath "set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (*verse 18*); and that the Spirit divides "to every man severally as he will" (*verse 11*). Observe also the prepositions in the following verse: "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." *Verse 8.BSPC 92.4*

We read that Christ, after He ascended to heaven, "gave gifts unto men." (*Ephesians 4:8*.) Note the words of the apostle:*BSPC 92.5*

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." *Verse 11.BSPC 92.6*

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." *Hebrews 2:4.BSPC 92.7*

In the Old Testament days also God sought to bring home to the hearts and minds of His servants that these special bestowments

were His prerogative; hence, He called the prophets “my prophets.” (*Psalm 105:15*.) Furthermore, the Spirit that came upon these servants of the Most High was the “Spirit of Christ” (*1 Peter 1:11*); it was the “spirit of the Lord” (*2 Samuel 23:2*); it was the “Holy Ghost” (*2 Peter 1:21*). When the prophets testified, they did so because of “thy spirit” (*Nehemiah 9:30*), and God declared that it was “my spirit” (*Isaiah 59:21*) that was in them.*BSPC 92.8*

Women and the Prophetic Gift

Through the ages God has usually called men to the prophetic ministry, doubtless for the same reason that He chose men for the priesthood and for other important offices in the church of God. It has been generally recognized that the duties and responsibilities of home and the care of children have placed upon women sufficiently heavy burdens without their having to be responsible for executive or administrative work outside the home. However, there have been times in the history of the church of God when faithful women were called to give God's people important and vital messages of warning and direction.*BSPC 93.1*

The following are a few who exercised the prophetic gift:*BSPC 93.2*

1. Miriam. Hers was particularly a singing and thanksgiving ministry. In *Exodus 15:20* we read that she was a "prophetess." She is the first woman whom the Bible honors with that title.*BSPC 93.3*
2. Deborah. Reference to her noble service is found in *Judges 4 and 5*. In chapter 4 *verse 4* she is called a "prophetess."*BSPC 93.4*
3. Hannah. We read the story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, in *1 Samuel 1 and 2*. The Bible does not expressly call her a prophetess, but it seems clear that she exercised the prophetic gift. Concerning her we read that her "hymn of thanksgiving is in the highest order of prophetic poetry."—*Smith's Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Hannah." "Hannah's words were prophetic."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 572.*BSPC 93.5*
4. Huldah. From the record of the book of Kings one is impressed by the fact that Huldah must have been quite a gifted woman. The story of her ministry has called forth many favorable comments through the years, especially by those who have prepared commentaries on the Bible. Adam Clarke, for instance, refers particularly to the fact that God called this woman, even though at the time other prophets were living and exercised their prophetic ministry.*BSPC 93.6*

Observe the following extracts:*BSPC 94.1*

“Huldah is the only example of a prophetess in Israel, who seems to rank on the same footing with the prophets.... Huldah has the full prophetic afflatus, and delivers God’s oracles just as Isaiah and Jeremiah do.”—*Pulpit Commentary on 2 Kings 22:15*.BSPC 94.2

“Here in this narrative is a striking testimony to the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in Women. The grave Priest, the learned Scribe, the honorable Courtiers, did not disdain to knock at the door of a prophetess, but came to learn the will of God at her mouth.”—Chr. Wordsworth, *The Holy Bible*, vol. 3, p. 154.BSPC 94.3

5. Anna. We read concerning the ministry of Anna in *Luke 2:36*. In this text she is called a “prophetess.” Some of the commentators describe her as being possessed of the gift of the Spirit of prophecy.BSPC 94.4

6. Elisabeth. The story of Elisabeth is told quite briefly in *Luke 1:41, 42*. Although she is not designated as a prophetess, she “was filled with the Holy Ghost,” and broke forth in prophetic utterance. A good note on this experience is as follows:BSPC 94.5

“Elisabeth was herself ‘filled with the Holy Ghost,’ or a spirit of prophecy.... The welcome which Elisabeth, by the spirit of prophecy, gave to Mary, the mother of our Lord.”—*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 247.BSPC 94.6

In the light of the foregoing it need not be thought at all strange that in the last days God, in His providence, should choose a woman through whom to bear His message of warning, of instruction, and of counsel to His remnant church.BSPC 94.7

The true prophet of God was called upon, on many occasions, to perform numerous duties that covered a wide range of service. One thing must ever be borne in mind—the prophet in his ministry differs from others of God’s servants in that in a special way he receives divine enlightenment, many times in vision. In other words, he becomes divinely inspired, so that when he speaks he speaks no message of his own, but the message of his God.BSPC 94.8

This brings us once again to the important truth that a prophet who is called of God and accepted of Heaven as a mouthpiece of the

Most High declares in a special way the message of Heaven.*BSPC*
94.9

The word most frequently used in the Hebrew Bible for prophet is nabi, and though we are told that its original meaning is somewhat obscure, it seems to convey the idea of one who “bubbles forth,” or “pours forth.” The thought is that through divine inspiration there is something within the prophet that bubbles up. There is a welling up of hidden springs of power, which manifest themselves in prophetic utterance, either of a predictive or of an interpretive character.*BSPC*
95.1

The Widespread Character of the Prophet's Work

Unfortunately the word “prophet” is too often understood as applying only to one who predicts the future. This is too limited a meaning; it is not sufficiently elastic. The work of a prophet is of much wider scope. One writer ventures to coin certain words to express points of difference and to indicate three main ideas involved in the prophetic office.*BSPC 95.2*

1. A for-teller. This would involve speaking for another, and perhaps speaking in the name of another. Under such circumstances he might readily be recognized as a spokesman, a messenger, or an interpreter.*BSPC 95.3*

2. A fore-teller. This naturally indicates the gift of prophesying future events. Here we envisage a man like Daniel unveiling the future.*BSPC 95.4*

3. A forth-teller. This would mean a man conscious of the fact that he had a special message to deliver. He would tell forth. He would proclaim, and as such he would be a preacher or a herald.*BSPC 95.5*

Specific Phases of His Work

There are many aspects of the prophetic ministry revealed in the word of God, and certain of these will be listed, with the threefold classification as given above for our information, our instruction, and our guidance.*BSPC 95.6*

1. As a for-teller. This introduces the most important phase of the work of God's servants the prophets. They spoke "for" God. Aaron was a prophet (*Exodus 7:1*), but he was to exercise that gift as a "spokesman" (*Exodus 4:16*). Over and over again the prophet was commanded to tell forth, to speak, and to declare to the people what God had revealed to him.*BSPC 95.7*

"In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God."*Education, 46.BSPC 96.1*

2. As a fore-teller. This naturally introduces the predictive aspects of the prophet's work; and, whether in Old Testament or in New Testament days, God had prophets, at some times more than others, who had this special gift. Revelations came largely through visions, either of the day or of the night, and the prophets were enabled to outline coming events, impending disaster, or even the advent of the Messiah. Some even went further, and looked forward to the establishment of the kingdom of God and the total eradication of sin from the fair universe of God. Many were the messengers of this character. Mention might be made of a few, such as Daniel, Joel, Isaiah, Zechariah, and others in the Old Testament, besides Paul, John, and Agabus in the New.*BSPC 96.2*

Referring to her own work, Mrs. E. G. White has written, in the Introduction to her volume entitled *The Great Controversy*, the following:*BSPC 96.3*

"Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of *The Great Controversy* between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of

God's holy law."—Page x.*BSPC 96.4*

3. As a forth-teller. The two aspects of the prophet's work just considered are in a sense specific and limited, but this section, that of being a forth teller, is of more varied and wider range. It covers many different lines of service. Let us observe a few of them:*BSPC 96.5*

a. The prophet as an intercessor

This phase of the work is mentioned concerning but few of the prophets. It is, however, characteristic of some. We might think of Abraham (*Genesis 20:7*), for God instructed him to pray, or intercede, in behalf of Abimelech. This, it so happens, is the first reference to a prophet in the Bible. Even before this incident we see Abraham in the capacity of an intercessor, when God revealed to him His purpose to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. (*Genesis 18:23-33*) Mention might also be made of Moses, the prophet of God, who interceded on behalf of Israel, and who was willing even to be blotted out of God's book of remembrance if only the people might be saved. (*Exodus 32:30-35*).*BSPC 96.6*

b. The prophet as a giver of warning

This was an important part of his ministry. Like the watchman, he was to warn the people from God. This called for the overshadowing of the Divine Spirit, in order that the prophet might rightly interpret conditions obtaining at the time he ministered. It was necessary for him to be able to see what the people and even the leaders could not see. God, however, in vision, gave to His servant divine illumination, so that he could discern the subtle devices of the evil one, and thus warn the people concerning the result of the course they were pursuing. Many are the Biblical examples of this phase of prophetic ministry. One only needs to read the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets to recognize the force of this.*BSPC 97.1*

As to the nature of the work Mrs. E. G. White was called upon to do, note the following from her pen:*BSPC 97.2*

“In His providence the Lord has seen fit to teach and warn His people in various ways. By direct command, by the sacred writings, and by the, spirit of prophecy has He made known unto them His will.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:12, 13.BSPC 97.3*

“I shall warn, and counsel, and reprove, and encourage, as the Spirit of God dictates, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. My duty is not to please myself, but to do the will of my heavenly Father, who has given me my work.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:232.BSPC 97.4*

c. The prophet as a giver of counsel

There are so many instances of this in the Divine Record that reference is made to but a few instances. In addition to giving warnings to the people, the prophets were called upon to give counsel on many matters. In one place we see the prophet Nathan giving counsel to another prophet, namely, to David, the king of Israel. In this counsel he expresses the will of God regarding the building of the Temple. (*1 Chronicles 17:1-4.*) Then we see the prophet Gad telling David of the punishment that would come to him for his pride in taking the census of Israel. (*1 Chronicles 21:1-12.*) The prophets Zechariah and Haggai were raised up in a crisis hour in later days. The people and the leaders needed special counsel, and to meet this need God sent to them His servants the prophets.*BSPC 97.5*

Josiah consulted the prophetess Huldah before carrying forward the work of reformation in Israel. (*2 Kings 22:13, 14.*) Jehoshaphat went out to meet the invaders from Moab and Ammon in response to the counsel of the prophet jahaziel. (*2 Chronicles 20:14-21*)*BSPC 98.1*

In like manner today God sends to His remnant church messages of counsel and warning through the same gift of prophecy.*BSPC 98.2*

“In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the Testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and

the course that He would have them pursue. But will they profit by His teachings? will they receive His reproofs and heed His warnings? God will accept of no partial obedience; He will sanction no compromise with self.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 4:147, 148.*BSPC* 98.3

d. The prophet as a teacher

Generally in Israel, teaching was associated with the priesthood. We read in one place that the people of God had been “without a teaching priest” (*2 Chronicles* 15:3); and that “Jehoiada the priest instructed” Jehoash (*2 Kings* 12:2). We read also that “the Levites ... taught the good knowledge of the Lord.” *2 Chronicles* 30:22.*BSPC* 98.4

But there were instances in which the prophet of God became a teacher in Israel. Jeremiah records the fact that God sent His “servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them.” *Jeremiah* 29:19. In the same book, however, he tells concerning Jehovah, “I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.” *Jeremiah* 32:33.*BSPC* 98.5

In the Spirit of prophecy we read also concerning the teaching aspect of the prophet’s work:*BSPC* 98.6

“But the name [prophet] was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God.”—*Education*, 46.*BSPC* 98.7

e. The prophet as a denouncer of sin

A large part of the work of God’s servants the prophets was in rebuking the wrongdoing of His people, and denouncing their iniquity. One is made deeply conscious of this trend in the spiritual experience of the church in those days. Numerous references could be given concerning this; the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some of the minor prophets abound in instances of this nature.*BSPC* 98.8

The Spirit of prophecy comments on this part of Israel’s experience as follows:*BSPC* 99.1

“Through His prophets He had sent to His chosen people message after message of earnest entreaty.”—*Prophets and Kings*, 333.BSPC 99.2

“The prophets continued to protest against these evils, and to plead for right doing.”—*Prophets and Kings*, 282.BSPC 99.3

“He sent His prophets to warn the guilty, denounce their sins, and pronounce judgment upon them.”*Testimonies for the Church* 4:12.BSPC 99.4

“Faithfully the prophets continued their warnings and their exhortations; fearlessly they spoke to Manasseh and to his people; but the messages were scorned; backsliding Judah would not heed.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 4:382, 383.BSPC 99.5

f. The prophet as a leader of sacred songs

We see Miriam the prophetess as a song leader quite early in the experience of Israel. (*Exodus* 15:20.) We see other instances of such leadership in later days. The prophets Nathan and, Gad were closely associated with David, especially in making arrangements for the choral responses and the music in general, in the temple service. We read:BSPC 99.6

“And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.” *2 Chronicles* 29:25.BSPC 99.7

g. The prophet as interpreter of the past, present, and future

This has already been dealt with to some extent, but it is mentioned here again to emphasize the nature of the work of the Spirit of prophecy in the Advent Movement. At least part of the work entrusted to the messenger of the Lord is of this character. This can be seen in her own testimony.BSPC 99.8

“As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His

word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed, to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future....*BSPC 99.9*

“It is not so much the object of this book to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events. Yet viewed as a part of the controversy between the forces of light and darkness, all these records of the past are seen to have a new significance. And through them a light is cast upon the future, illumining the pathway of those who, like the reformers of past ages, will be called even at the peril of all earthly good to witness ‘for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.’”—*The Great Controversy*, Introduction, pp. xi, xii.*BSPC 99.10*

h. The prophet as a receiver of messages that at times he knows not where or to whom to send

This is very evident from at least one instance in the history of the kings of old. We read, “And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet.” *2 Chronicles 21:12*.*BSPC 100.1*

Here reference is made to a “writing” that had been prepared by the prophet Elijah. But Elijah at this time was dead. The margin of the Bible recognizes this, for the marginal note reads, “which was writ before his death.” It would seem that this manuscript had been entrusted to the care of another prophet of God. Then in later days, when the specific need arose, God gave to this prophet who had Elijah’s writing in his possession, divine enlightenment as to whom it was to be sent and also the exact time it should be sent. This is something at which we need not be surprised. The God who gave the message to one prophet could surely instruct a succeeding prophet to deliver a message written perhaps years before.*BSPC 100.2*

This was so in the experience of the messenger of the Lord in the Advent cause. She herself testifies:*BSPC 100.3*

“As the Lord has manifested Himself through the spirit of prophecy, ‘past, present, and future have passed before me. I have been shown faces that I had never seen, and years afterward I knew them when I saw them. I have been aroused from my sleep with a vivid sense of subjects previously presented to my mind; and I have written, at midnight, letters that have gone across the continent, and, arriving at a crisis, have saved great disaster to the cause of God. This has been my work for many years.’”—*Testimonies for the Church* 5:671.*BSPC* 100.4

i. The prophet as a messenger of encouragement

There was a time in the leadership of Moses when things were very trying for this man of God. He had borne long with the waywardness of Israel, and it seemed as though the limit had been reached. The people had fretted because of the food God had provided for them in the wilderness; they kept craving for the flesh pots of Egypt. Not only was the anger of the Lord kindled, but Moses was greatly displeased and discouraged. He cried out to the Lord in his extremity.*BSPC* 100.5

“And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore has thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou lays the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou should say unto me, carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child, unto the land which thou swore unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.” *Numbers* 11:11-14.*BSPC* 101.1

In this hour of perplexity God directed Moses to gather together seventy of the elders of Israel. These He clothed with His Spirit, and they began to prophesy. The record states, “When the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.” *Verse* 25.*BSPC* 101.2

We read:*BSPC* 101.3

“As these men in loud and ecstatic language proclaimed their faith, Moses found his confidence in Jehovah’s power and in the destiny of Israel re-established. His mind was relieved at once of the burden of responsibility and the dread of an extinction of the heavenly light he had been the means of kindling among the tribes. If there were seventy men capable of receiving the Spirit of God, there might be hundreds, even thousands. A spring of new enthusiasm is opened, and Israel’s future is again possible.”—*The Book of Numbers*, p. 130, in *Expositor’s Bible* (1908). *BSPC 101.4*

So God encouraged His servant in this time of trial. Here was a case of seventy prophets encouraging another prophet in a period of great crisis. As to the prophet being a bringer of good tidings, note: *BSPC 101.5*

“In the darkest days of her long conflict with evil, the church of God has been given revelations of the eternal purpose of Jehovah. His people have been permitted to look beyond the trials of the present to the triumphs of the future, when, the warfare having been accomplished, the redeemed will enter into possession of the promised land. These visions of future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, should be dear to His church today, when the controversy of the ages is rapidly closing, and the promised blessings are soon to be realized in all their fullness. *BSPC 101.6*

“Many were the messages of comfort given the church by the prophets of old. ‘Comfort you, comfort you My people,’ was Isaiah’s commission from God; and with the commission were given wonderful visions that have been the believers’ hope and joy through all the centuries that have followed. Despised of men, persecuted, forsaken, God’s children in every age have nevertheless been sustained by His sure promises. By faith they have looked forward to the time when He will fulfill to His church the assurance, ‘I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.’”—*Prophets and Kings*, 722, 723. *BSPC 101.7*

j. The prophet as an interpreter of the Divine Word

The prophets of old studied the writings of the prophets who had preceded them in the prophetic office. This is seen in the case of

Daniel, who gave careful thought to the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning the seventy years' captivity of Israel in Babylon. (*Daniel 9:2*.) Furthermore, quite often they repeated the messages that their predecessors had given. We see an instance of this in the case of Zechariah. Notice *Zechariah 1:6* and *7:7*. Not only so, but we find them interpreting and amplifying the messages of previous servants of God.*BSPC 102.1*

The same thing has been true in the experience of the prophetic gift in the ranks of God's remnant people. The testimonies of the messenger of God emphasize this quite forcefully.*BSPC 102.2*

"The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's word, yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse....*BSPC 102.3*

"The testimonies are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it, and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all."—*Testimonies for the Church 5:665*.*BSPC 102.4*

Chapter 7—The Testimony of Jesus—the Spirit of Prophecy

“I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 19:10.BSPC 102.5

The Testimony of Jesus

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the remnant people is called by the writer of the Apocalypse “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” This is interpreted as “the spirit of prophecy.” (*Revelation 12:17; 19:10.*) These two expressions are peculiar to the book of Revelation. They are not found in any other book of the Bible.*BSPC 103.1*

The actual words “testimony of Jesus” occur but twice in the Authorized Version of the book of Revelation, in the same verse. (*Revelation 19:10.*) The term appears, however, in another form, “testimony of Jesus Christ,” three times. (*Revelation 12, 9; 12:17.*) There is still one other phrase of similar intent. In this instance it is rendered “witness of Jesus.” (*Revelation 20:4.*) The word “witness” in this case is from the same Greek word rendered “testimony” in the other texts. Hence, in these forms the expression is used by the prophet John six times in the last book of the Bible.*BSPC 103.2*

There are two similar expressions to be found in the writings of the apostle Paul. They are as follows: “testimony of Christ” (*1 Corinthians 1:6*) and “testimony of our Lord” (*2 Timothy 1:8*). Although the word “testimony” is used in this relationship eight times altogether, the expression “spirit of prophecy” is unique, in that *Revelation 19:10* is the only place in the Divine Record where the term appears.*BSPC 103.3*

Seventh-day Adventists, accepting the testimony of the apostles, believe in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. That being the case, it has not been difficult for them to understand the divine forecast that “the testimony of Jesus,” “the spirit of prophecy,” would be operative in the remnant church. They have felt that this means a revival of the spiritual gifts, and that among them would be seen the “spirit of prophecy.” They understand this expression to mean that particular revelation that comes through those whom the word of God calls prophets. Through the years they have believed and taught, and still believe and teach, that this gift has been exercised among them in the life and work of Mrs. E. G. White, who for several decades received revelations and visions from the Lord. They prize very highly the counsel, admonition, and light concerning the future that

have come through this agency. Through the years this counsel was given to the church by oral word and by the written page. This counsel was incorporated in periodical articles, pamphlets, and books, such as Testimonies for the Church, and other volumes.*BSPC 103.4*

This claim on the part of the Advent people has met with opposition from many quarters. This is not difficult to understand, especially since many believe that the necessity for spiritual gifts ceased shortly after apostolic days. Those who do not accept John's interpretation of the "testimony of Jesus" as the "spirit of prophecy" naturally endeavor to find other meanings for both these terms.*BSPC 104.1*

The Word “Testimony” in the Bible

As we look at the word “testimony” as used in the Sacred Scriptures, and examine the words in the original language that have been translated “testimony,” “witness,” “gave testimony,” or “bear witness,” in the Authorized Version, we shall find that they have several meanings. Mention might be made of the following:*BSPC 104.2*

1. The Ten-Commandment Law. (*Exodus 31:18; Revelation 15, 5*)

The word testimony is applied to the Decalogue in both the Old and the New Testament. In the Scriptures we read of the “tables of the testimony,” “the ark of the testimony,” “the tabernacle of the testimony,” “the vail of the testimony”—the “testimony” itself being the law of God as written on the two tables of stone.*BSPC 104.3*

2. The Law of Moses Other Than the Ten-Commandment Law

This thought of testimony in relation to the Mosaic law, is emphasized in *2 Kings 23:3* and also *Nehemiah 9:34* and other scriptures. In *2 Kings 23:3* we read of “his commandments and his testimonies.”*BSPC 105.1*

3. The Legal Witness for or Against Another. (*Deuteronomy 19:16, 18.*)

The witness borne in court is called the testimony, and the person who bears such witness is said to testify. Furthermore, we read, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” *2 Corinthians 13:1**BSPC 105.2*

4. The Testimony Borne Concerning Another

In this sense “testimony” is used frequently in both Testaments. One might think of such texts as *John 5:39*, where we read that the Scriptures “testify of me,” or *John 15:27*, where Jesus speaks of the disciples and says they “also shall bear witness.”*BSPC 105.3*

5. The Testimony Borne by the Individual Himself

“Testimony” is used with this meaning quite frequently. One might meditate on *John 5:31*, where definite reference is made to the witness borne by Christ Himself, both by word and by life.*BSPC 105.4*

6. The Messages of the Prophets

In the Old Testament days the messages conveyed by God’s servants, the prophets, to His people Israel were called testimonies. In bearing such testimonies the prophets are said to have “testified against them.” (*2 Kings 17:15*; *Nehemiah 9:26*.) This is referred to also in New Testament days. The apostle Peter, referring to the work of the prophets before the advent of the Savior, mentions the witness of the Spirit borne through the prophets when it “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ.” *1 Peter 1:11*. This is in full accord with the declaration of the same apostle when preaching before Cornelius and his household, when he declared that “to him give all the prophets witness.” *Acts 10:43*.*BSPC 105.5*

A still further reference is the one under discussion found in the Apocalypse in the passage already referred to, where the apostle John, using the expression “testimony of Jesus,” clearly defines this to be “the spirit of prophecy.”*BSPC 105.6*

Hence, in the foregoing classification giving references to the varied meanings of this word, it will be observed that in both the Old and the New Testament one of the meanings makes definite reference to the specific messages that come through God’s servants, the prophets, to His people.*BSPC 105.7*

Quite in harmony with this, A. G. Prichard gives the following definition:*BSPC 106.1*

“TESTIMONIES. Things to which God has borne testimony Perhaps the word ‘intentions’ would better express its significance. God’s intentions are in the nature of the case prophetic.”—Christ in *Psalms 119*, p. 21.*BSPC 106.2*

The Divine Definition

In view of the fact that in the Scriptures there are varied meanings to the word “testimony,” it would have to be conceded that a correct understanding of the term in any particular place it is used must of necessity be determined by its context. A careful study of the texts given in the afore-mentioned classification will show that this is true.*BSPC 106.3*

When we apply this principle to the expression “testimony of Jesus,” as we find it in the book of the Revelation, we must also think of it, not only in the light of its context, but also in the light of the definition given to it by its author in the same book. Singularly enough, the Lord has removed the meaning of this expression from the realm of doubt and uncertainty. There is no need for anyone to be in any perplexity on the matter whatsoever.*BSPC 106.4*

The apostle John records the message given to him, the message he received from “his angel.” (*Revelation 1:1*.) The angel is called “his”; this refers not to John but to Christ. The Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, and Christ sent and signified it by His angel to John. Further, when John records that the “testimony of Jesus” is the “spirit of prophecy,” it is not a definition given by John; it is the word of the angel who revealed it to him.*BSPC 106.5*

We must remember also that this is part of the revelation of Jesus as referred to in the first chapter of the Apocalypse. This revelation Christ gave to the angel. But it goes back further still; it is the revelation that God gave to Christ. So this is a divine definition in a special sense. It is from God and from Christ, and Christ the divine Son through His angel tells us that the “testimony of Jesus” is the “spirit of prophecy.”*BSPC 106.6*

Hence, in our study of this question in the book of the Revelation we need not concern ourselves with other ways in which the word testimony is used in the Scriptures generally. Our minds are directed into one channel, and that by the Lord Himself, when He gives us the definition of what the testimony of Jesus really means when He says the “spirit of prophecy.”*BSPC 107.1*

Commentators and Bible students generally recognize, in the main, two ways in which the expression “testimony of Jesus” may be understood. Many interpret the definition given by the angel (*Revelation 19:10*) as meaning “the testimony borne concerning Jesus Christ.” Hence, their understanding of the phrase is that it refers to the testimony we as Christians bear when we witness for the Savior before the world and before our friends by precept and example. Others feel that the expression means the testimony of Jesus Himself, the witness He bore in His own life while here on earth and the witness He continues to bear now in and through His servants the prophets.*BSPC 107.2*

Significance of the Genitive Form

The term in the original Greek is in the genitive case, generally the equivalent of the English construction with of, most commonly indicating possession. Hence it can be understood as Jesus' testimony—the testimony that Christ Himself bears today when He manifests Himself in a special way through those who have the gift of prophecy. When the New Testament writers tell of what they have seen in vision, the Spirit of Christ is just as verily in them as it was in the prophets in olden days. In this connection consider the following:*BSPC 107.3*

1. In *Revelation 1:1, 2* we read of the “Revelation of Jesus Christ.” This revelation “God gave unto him.” An angel is used by the Lord to convey this revelation to the prophet John. John bears record of “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” It will be observed that here we have the possessive genitive in each case. It is His “witness,” for the Father gave it to Him, and He gave it to His servant John.*BSPC 107.4*

2. The same thought is emphasized in *Hebrews 1:1, 2*. There we read that God, who “spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,” speaks to us today “by his Son.” The message was not that of the prophet; it was God’s message. The same thing is true today. God speaks through His beloved Son, and Christ speaks through the prophets. That which He speaks is His testimony the testimony of Jesus.*BSPC 107.5*

3. We might observe also the word given to us in *1 Peter 1:11*. Again we refer to the prophets of ancient days. When they ministered, when they bore their testimony, it was the result of the “Spirit of Christ which was in them.” These prophets were God’s servants. He sent them; He spoke through them. God claimed the prophets as His own. He called them “my servants the prophets.” (*Jeremiah 29:19*.) God also gave His word to them, for He said to His servant Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.” *Jeremiah 1:9*.*BSPC 108.1*

God’s word through the prophets was obligatory, for we read in *2 Chronicles 29:25*, “So was the commandment of the Lord by his

prophets.” God also revealed His secrets to the prophets. “He reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets.” *Amos 3:7.BSPC 108.2*

God revealed Himself to His prophets in visions and dreams. “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” *Numbers 12:6*. It was in this manner that He revealed His will to them.*BSPC 108.3*

4. The form of the expression in Revelation is “testimony of Jesus.” It is not testimony to Jesus or concerning Jesus, but the testimony of Him. This is in the genitive case; and another way of rendering this, as we have already seen, is “Jesus’ testimony.”*BSPC 108.4*

5. Whenever the expression is used in the book of the Revelation, the context invariably requires this interpretation. Note the occasions of its use: *Revelation 12*: “testimony of Jesus Christ”; *verse 9*: “testimony of Jesus Christ”; *Revelation 12:17*: “testimony of Jesus Christ”; *Revelation 19:10*: “testimony of Jesus”; *Revelation 20:4*: “witness of Jesus.”*BSPC 108.5*

Most English translations reproduce this genitive by an of construction in *Revelation 19:10*, as can be seen by consulting the following: Authorized, Revised, Weymouth, The Greek English New Testament (interlinear), Emphatic Diaglott, Murdock’s translation from the Syriac, Douay, Moulton, Goodspeed, et cetera.*BSPC 108.6*

There is but one of these translations of the New Testament to which we have access that uses the word to in *Revelation 19:10*, and that is the Twentieth Century New Testament. One not listed above, but which uses neither the word of nor the word to is the translation by Moffatt, and it is very definite. His rendering is, “The testimony borne by Jesus.”*BSPC 108.7*

6. In the list of texts given under section 5, notice that in each instance the idea of possession is indicated by the genitive case, the Greek words Jesus and Christ usually accompanied by the genitive form of the definite article the. There is no preposition in the Greek text to indicate our English word of. We supply that word

merely to indicate the genitive. Perhaps the matter will be clearer if we give the wording of the Greek and English in the first form of the phrase in *Revelation 19:10*: Ten marturian tou Iesou ("The testimony [of] Jesus").*BSPC 109.1*

It will be observed that the expression tou Iesou is in the genitive form. This naturally calls for the preposition of in English; the Greek article before a proper noun is not usually translated into English.*BSPC 109.2*

In the light of all the foregoing considerations there is good reason for understanding the expression "testimony of Jesus" as "His testimony," or the testimony, or witness, Christ bears in and through His servants to whom the prophetic gift has been granted.*BSPC 109.3*

The Spirit of Prophecy

But what about the expression “spirit of prophecy”? What does this mean? We have already noticed that it is used but once in the entire Bible, and that is in *Revelation 19:10*. Furthermore, we have no exact counterpart of this expression in Holy Scriptures to guide us. There are also other expressions similar in form, such as “the spirit of life” (*Revelation 11:11*), “the spirit of glory” (*1 Peter 4:14*), “the Spirit of grace” (*Hebrews 10:29*). But never do we find the expression “spirit of prophecy” in any other passage in the Sacred Scriptures.*BSPC 109.4*

But the term “spirit of prophecy” is not after all such an isolated expression as one might suppose. Although it occurs only once in the Holy Scriptures, it is to be found in ancient Jewish writings and also in a number of books of recent date. Several works where the expression is found are here cited.*BSPC 109.5*

The term “spirit of prophecy” with reference to the prophetic gift is found in the ancient Jewish writings. The expression occurs in the Targums on the Book of Genesis. Both the Onkelos and the Jerusalem Targum on *Genesis 41:38* read the same, as follows:*BSPC 110.1*

“And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find a man like this, in whom is the spirit of prophecy from the Lord?”—*The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, pp. 131, 303.*BSPC 110.2*

The Onkelos and the Palestine Targum concerning Joshua read:*BSPC 110.3*

“And the Lord said to Mosheli, Take to thee Jehoshua bar Nun, a man upon whom abides the Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 442.*BSPC 110.4*

Also Edward Lewis Curtis says that the Targum or paraphrase on Chronicles “explains somewhat similarly, except that the Sucathites are those ‘covered’ with a spirit of prophecy.”—*International Critical Commentary on Chronicles* (1910), p. 98.*BSPC 110.5*

The Targum of Jonathan on *2 Samuel 23:2* reads:*BSPC 110.6*

“David said, By the Spirit of prophecy of Jehovah I speak these things.”—Quoted in Appendix Note IV to II Samuel in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: University Press, 1899), p. 237.*BSPC 110.7*

The *Pulpit Commentary* remarks:*BSPC 110.8*

“David, in his last days, like Jacob and Moses, received the spirit of prophecy.”—On *2 Samuel 23:1-7*.*BSPC 110.9*

Leupold comments:*BSPC 110.10*

“Jacob has been induced by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, to do this.”—H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (1942), p. 1155.*BSPC 110.11*

Commenting on *2 Kings 22:14*, Joseph Priestly remarks concerning Huldah:*BSPC 110.12*

“It pleased God to distinguish several women with the spirit of prophecy, as well as other great attainments, to show that, in his sight, and especially in things of a spiritual nature, there is no essential pre-eminence in the male sex.”—*Notes on All the Books of Scripture*, vol. 2, p. 40.*BSPC 110.13*

James Darmesteter refers to the “Spirit of prophecy” in his “Prophets of Israel,” in his *Selected Essays*, page 43.*BSPC 110.14*

J. C. Lambert in an article on “Prophet” tells us that “the spirit of prophecy, as it meets us under the Old Dispensation, runs on into the New.” This appears in *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible*, page 764.*BSPC 110.15*

In the *Abingdon Bible Commentary* the author refers to “the bestowal of the spirit of prophecy on the seventy elders.”—page 302.*BSPC 111.1*

In the *Jewish Encyclopedia* we read, “The Holy Spirit is at times identified with the spirit of prophecy.”—Article, “Holy Spirit” (1.904),

vol. 6, p. 449.*BSPC 111.2*

C. S. Streatfield assures us that Christ in His work was moved by “the Spirit of Prophecy.”—The Incarnation, p. 41.*BSPC 111.3*

John Lightfoot remarks, “The Jerusalem Talmudists say, There were five things wanting under the second Temple, which were, under the first; the fire from Heaven, the Ark, Urim and Thummim, the oil of anointing, and the holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Prophecy.”—Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations Upon the Evangelist St. John, in Works of John Lightfoot, vol. 2, p. 802.*BSPC 111.4*

Matthew Henry, in his commentary on the Bible, uses the term “spirit of prophecy” in relation to the following persons:*BSPC 111.5*

Deborah	Vol. 1, p. 517	Simeon	Vol. 3, p. 254
Hannah	Vol. 1, p. 584	Elisabeth	Vol. 3, p. 247
Huldah	Vol. 1, p. 835	Agabus	Vol. 3, p. 633
Anna	Vol. 3, p. 254	Gentiles	Vol. 2, p. 1040

Peter Lange uses it also in his commentary on *Luke 2:36, 26*. It is found also in the Pulpit Commentary relating to Moses and Jacob on *2 Samuel 23:1, 2*.*BSPC 111.6*

In the year 1679 there was published in London, England, a volume entitled The Spirit of Prophecy. It was written by William Hughes, a prominent minister in his day. Over and over again he makes use of the expression, particularly showing that Christ and His apostles had this gift in wonderful measure and that this was one of the great evidences of the divine impress upon their ministry.*BSPC 111.7*

In the light of these references it is evident that John did not coin the expression “spirit of prophecy”; it was evidently a term in current use in his day, as is seen in its use in the Targums and the Jewish writings. Furthermore, modern commentators and writers quite freely use it to designate what John also calls “the testimony of Jesus.”*BSPC 111.8*

Comparing Two Vital Passages

The apostle John not only gives us the definition of the term “testimony of Jesus” but also reveals in another passage in the Apocalypse something that keys the expression “testimony of Jesus” to the prophetic gift. We might compare certain expressions in *Revelation 19 and 22*. In both passages we read that John falls at the feet of the angel to worship him. In both places we read the counsel of the angel: “See thou do it not”; “worship God.” In both instances the angel says, “I am thy fellow-servant.” But notice how the next expression is rendered. In *Revelation 19* it is in one form and in *Revelation 22* in another. In *Revelation 19:10* we read, “of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus”; and in *Revelation 22:9*, “of thy brethren the prophets.” In this comparison we have further evidence concerning the “testimony of Jesus” being connected definitely with the prophetic gift. The angel is referring to those whom he calls John’s brethren. But who are they? In one place he says that they are the prophets. In the other they are those who have the “testimony of Jesus.” So we affirm that in the apostle John’s thinking the expression “testimony of Jesus” is intimately associated with, and an integral part of, the prophetic gift. *BSPC 112.1*

We would repeat John’s declaration. It seems that in order to prevent any misunderstanding as to the meaning he gives to the expression, the beloved apostle makes the matter unmistakably clear when he gives us the following equivalent statements: “I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.” *Revelation 19:10*. “I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets.” *Revelation 22:9. BSPC 112.2*

Here the testimony of Jesus is linked with the work of the prophets of God in a way that surely cannot be misunderstood. This fact, together with others already mentioned, should enable us clearly to understand why, in *Revelation 19:10*, “the testimony of Jesus” is called “the spirit of prophecy.” *BSPC 112.3*

If, after considering the evidences here presented, some should still feel constrained to urge that the expression “testimony of Jesus” should be understood somewhat in its objective rather than its

subjective sense, the reply is that the objective might be considered, but only as a secondary meaning. That the primary significance of this expression is subjective—the “testimony of Jesus” means Jesus’ testimony, either in Himself or in and through His servants upon whom He has bestowed the prophetic gift, has been established. Certainly, after the prophet has received the divine illumination and goes forth with his message to man, in the giving of that message he is surely bearing testimony concerning his Lord and Master.*BSPC 112.4*

The Messages of Mrs. E. G. White

As already mentioned, Seventh-day Adventists have believed through the years that the gift of prophecy has been manifested in their midst. For seven decades Mrs. E. G. White, the messenger of the Lord to the Advent people, gave messages of counsel and warning, which we believe were just as verily from God as were the messages of the prophets in days of old. It is true that the life of Mrs. White closed in 1915, but it is also true that her work still lives. Her books of counsel are still with us. Near the close of her life she declared:*BSPC 113.1*

“Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last.”—*Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, pp. 13, 14.*BSPC 113.2*

We can rejoice that the church has had the counsel of the prophetic gift for guidance and direction.*BSPC 113.3*

What the future may hold none of us can tell. World conditions may bring about situations where large sections of the church may be isolated, and where they may be unable to communicate one with the other. What the Lord may do under such circumstances we cannot forecast. God may raise up other prophets to meet local situations, but be it ever remembered that the bestowment of this gift is made by the Lord, and when it is manifested in any particular individual it will meet every Bible test, and there will be clear, definite evidences, so that the church will recognize it just as they did in the case of youthful Samuel. He was given that gift. He exercised it, the people watched, they listened to his counsel, they watched his life, they learned to have confidence in him. The Divine Record mentions that then “Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” *1 Samuel 3:20.BSPC 113.4*

Chapter 8—The Relationships of the Spirit of Prophecy to the Bible

What is the relationship of the Spirit of prophecy to the Bible? This is an important question. It is asked by many honest inquirers. Believing as we do that the Bible is an all-sufficient guide in matters of faith and doctrine, we naturally query, Why do we need the Spirit of prophecy? If it is God's plan that this gift be manifested in the church, what then is the relationship between the gift of prophecy and the Holy Scriptures? The purpose of this chapter is to study this relationship.*BSPC 113.5*

In the first place consideration will be given to the supreme authority of the word of God. It is a good thing at times to remind ourselves of some of the things most surely believed among us. It is encouraging at all times to be put in remembrance of these things, though we know them, that we might be established in the present truth. (*2 Peter 1:12.*)*BSPC 113.6*

1. The Testimony of the Scripture Concerning Itself

This aspect of the question has been fully covered in the first section of this book, but reference will be made to a few passages from the word of God in this connection. One cannot ponder the sacred pages of God's Holy Word without being made conscious of the finality of that word. It speaks with authority; it recognizes no competitor in its field. It is unique in that it is the word of the everlasting God, the word spoken by God, and given to men through His servants the prophets.*BSPC 114.1*

It is so full and complete that it is "able to make us wise unto salvation." *2 Timothy 3:15.* It will do this so fully that if a man yield's to its authority, "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." *Verse 17.* This is the word that is the final test of what is true doctrine. As far back as the days of Isaiah this was emphasized by the Lord.*BSPC 114.2*

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." *Isaiah 8:20.**BSPC 115.1*

The Bereans followed this excellent counsel; we find in connection with the message of the apostle Paul that “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” *Acts 17:11.BSPC 115.2*

This is the word that Jesus endorsed, and that He used effectively in His conflict with the evil one in the wilderness of temptation. Several times He fell back on the Eternal Word of His Father, with the expression, “It is written.” Consequently, so far as the Scriptures are concerned, they bear unequivocal testimony to the veracity and to the ultimate authority of the word of Jehovah as the highest and the only standard of faith, of doctrine, and of conduct.*BSPC 115.3*

2. The Testimony of the Reformation

The testimony of the German princes at the Diet of Spires is worthy of the most careful and thoughtful study. They made a bold statement, and doing so required a courage born of Heaven. These men were intrepid warriors of the cross; they “loved not their lives unto the death.” It meant something to take the stand they did, faced as they were with all the power of church and state arrayed against them. But God blessed their noble witness, and their fearless protest has become a mighty battle cry, which needs to be more strongly emphasized in these days when true religion seems to be on the decline. Part of this testimony reads as follows:*BSPC 115.4*

“There is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the Word of God. That the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; and that this holy book is in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness. We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of his only Word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testament, without adding any thing thereto that may be contrary to it. This Word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, whilst all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.”—

D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, pp. 520, 521.*BSPC 115.5*

3. The Testimony of the Messenger of the Lord

Many are the expressions to be found in the writings of Mrs. E. G. White extolling the Scriptures of truth. Over and over again the servant of the Lord pointed to the Divine Word as the only standard of doctrine and as the only sure guide in matters of faith. Note the following:*BSPC 116.1*

"I recommend to you, dear reader, the word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By the word we are to be judged. God has, in that word, promised to give visions in the 'LAST DAYS': not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth."—*Early Writings*, 78.*BSPC 116.2*

"The Bible should ever have been made the great, grand book of study, which has come down to us from heaven, and is the word of life."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 384.*BSPC 116.3*

"We are to receive God's word as supreme authority. We must accept its truths for ourselves. And we can appreciate these truths only as we search them out by personal study. Then, as we make God's word the guide of our lives, for us is answered the prayer of Christ: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.'*John 17:17*. The acknowledgment of the truth in word and deed is our confession of faith. Only thus can others know that we believe the Bible."—*Testimonies for the Church* 6:402, 403.*BSPC 116.4*

4. The Testimony of the Advent Church

The quotations that follow not only express the confidence of the church in the Holy Scriptures but also indicate something of what it believes concerning the relationship that the Spirit of prophecy bears to God's revelation in His Holy Word.*BSPC 116.5*

The following quotation is from one of the earliest publications in the Advent cause, published in 1847.*BSPC 116.6*

"The Bible is a perfect, and complete revelation. It is our only rule of

faith and practice. But this is no reason, why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfillment of His word, in these last days by dreams and visions; according to Peter's testimony. True visions are given to lead us to God, and His written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected."—*A Word to the Little Flock*, 13.*BSPC 116.7*

James White, at that time the recognized leader of Seventh-day Adventists, wrote in the December issue, no. 5, of the *Present Truth*, in 1849:*BSPC 116.8*

"The Bible is our lamp, our guide. It is our rule of faith and practice: still there is no reason why God may not give special revelations to lead the erring to God, and His living word."—page 40.*BSPC 117.1*

Another article from his pen appeared in the *The Review and Herald*, April 21, 1851, part of which reads as follows:*BSPC 117.2*

"Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position. The word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in 'all good works.' But if a portion of the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak, and sickly, and the flock become scattered, so that it seems necessary for God to employ the gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive and heal the erring, we should let him work. Yea more, we should pray for him to work and plead earnestly that he would work by the Spirit's power, and bring the scattered sheep to his fold. Praise the Lord, he will work. Amen." *BSPC 117.3*

George I. Butler, president of the General Conference in 1883, wrote:*BSPC 117.4*

"The majority of our people believe these visions to be a genuine manifestation of spiritual gifts, and as such to be entitled to respect.

We do not hold them to be superior to the Bible, or in one sense equal to it. The Scriptures are our rule to test everything by, the visions as well as all other things. That rule, therefore, is of the highest authority; the standard is higher than the thing tested by it. If the Bible should show the visions were not in harmony with it, the Bible would stand, and the visions would be given up. This shows plainly that we hold the Bible the highest, our enemies to the contrary, notwithstanding.”—*Review and Herald*, Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883.*BSPC 117.5*

The revised Church Manual adopted by the General Conference in 1950 contains the following in its statement of fundamental beliefs:*BSPC 117.6*

“That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:15-17).”—page 29.*BSPC 117.7*

These excerpts have been quoted from articles that appeared mainly in the early years of the Advent Movement, so that the reader might see that from the very beginning of this cause the Bible has been given not only an honored place but the first place in the teachings of the church. Also the latest pronouncement made in 1950 has been quoted. In the literature of intervening years references to the same standard of truth are abundant, but further quoting will be omitted in view of the clear, concise expressions given above.*BSPC 117.8*

The Scriptures Comprise Several Divine Revelations

There are well-recognized divisions of the Holy Scriptures. These apply particularly to the Old Testament, which through the ages has been divided by the Jews into three sections—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. This can be seen in any Jewish Bible at the present day. A casual glance at one of the latest editions will enable the reader to see the following, which appears on the introductory page to each section:*BSPC 118.1*

Section 1. The Law:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.*BSPC 118.2*

Section 2. The Prophets:

Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*BSPC 118.3*

Section 3. The Writings:

Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles.*BSPC 118.4*

This accounts for the thirty-nine books comprising the Old Testament oracles. Jesus endorsed these three parts of the Scriptures of truth. In His talk to the disciples as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, He said, “All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” *Luke 24:44*. In this instance the word “psalms” is a representative term for the third section of the Scriptures, namely, the Holy Writings.*BSPC 118.5*

Now that we have the New Testament we might say that the Holy Scriptures are divided into four recognized divisions.*BSPC 118.6*

These four sections of Holy Writ are intimately and harmoniously

related. They are not disjointed parts of independent thought and teaching; each one is closely and doctrinally united to the others.*BSPC 118.7*

Through the patriarchal age God maintained contact with His chosen ones through the ministry of angels and also through the visions of His servants the prophets. In later days, as the plan of God for the worship of His people opened out more fully, the sanctuary service was established with its priesthood, its system of sacrifices, and its full round of festivals. This development called for special direction, for something in written form, covering not only the offering of sacrifices but also laws governing the sanitary and civil life of the people. There had to be laws governing their relationships one to the other in the matter of property, land, labor, and many other phases of community life.*BSPC 119.1*

Growing out of this need came what we know as “the law of Moses.” This is comprised in the first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch, which means, the five books. The word pentateuch comes from two Greek words, pente, meaning “five,” and teuchos, meaning “book.”*BSPC 119.2*

It will readily be appreciated that this series of volumes would never have been necessary had not sin entered our fair world. But as sin came, and the law of God, the first divine revelation, had been transgressed, God in His mercy and loving-kindness gave to man a blueprint, a series of detailed data and information as to how he could now get free from the sin that the law of God revealed. In other words, the Pentateuch emphasized the law of God; it explained it; it simplified it. It showed not only the sacredness of the divine precepts but also a way out. It pointed to the sacrifices, which, when the worshiper entered into them intelligently, would lead him to exercise faith in the “Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”*BSPC 119.3*

This revelation from God through Moses, as comprised in the five books that bear his name, was in itself for the time being a complete revelation. This was made plain by the Lord to Moses, and by him to the leaders and people of Israel, for we read:*BSPC 119.4*

“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers gives you. You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” *Deuteronomy 4:1, 2.BSPC 119.5*

“What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: thou shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” *Deuteronomy 12:32.BSPC 120.1*

Later in the providence of God, prophets arose in Israel, and through them God continued to speak to men. Careful study of the prophetic writings will reveal that the prophets repeatedly called the attention of the people to the “law of Moses.” In other words, God laid upon them the burden of calling their attention to the revelation which they already had but which they had neglected to follow. They had what was necessary in the Pentateuch, but they had spurned its teachings. They had become so familiar with it that it ceased to make any appeal to their hearts. So God, in His compassion for men and in His earnest longing for their salvation, sent them His servants the prophets. They came, however, not with any new message, only of course as certain pronouncements they made were predictive and pertained to the coming Messiah and the glories of His everlasting kingdom. But the messages of warning, of entreaty, of counsel, and of exhortation all called their attention to that which God had already revealed in the five books of Moses. The following texts with short extracts from the verses referred to will illustrate this thought:*BSPC 120.2*

“Whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.” *Judges 3:4.BSPC 120.3*

“Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you.” *Joshua 1:13.BSPC 120.4*

“Keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses.” *1 Kings 2:3.BSPC 120.5*

“According unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses.” *2 Kings 14:6.BSPC 120.6*

Not only so, but we find the prophets of later days referring to the messages of the prophets of former years. Examples of this can be seen in such scriptures as *Daniel 9:10, Zechariah 1:6, 7, 12; Jeremiah 29:19; Hosea 6:5; 12:10; Amos 3:7.BSPC 120.7*

It seems that when the writings of the prophets had been gathered into the collection as referred to in the section entitled “The Prophets,” on page 118, this revelation was also regarded as complete. This can be seen in Paul’s letter to Timothy, in which he refers to the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, including the prophetic writings, in *2 Timothy 3:15-17*. He writes:*BSPC 120.8*

They “are able to make thee wise unto salvation.”*BSPC 121.1*

They are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*BSPC 121.2*

They will make “the man of God ... perfect.”*BSPC 121.3*

They will “thoroughly” furnish (perfect) him “unto all good works.”*BSPC 121.4*

That the list of the prophetic books as given on page 118 under the title “The Prophets” was complete, is further seen in the Savior’s endorsement of these Sacred Writings. (See *Matthew 5:17; 17:10, 11; Luke 18:31*.) Hence in the writings of these messengers of God we find them referring not only to the revelations given to the prophets who preceded them in service but in a special way to the revelation God had made through His servant Moses. They directed attention to it; they urged the people to obey the divine precepts contained therein; they reminded them of the penalty that would inevitably follow if they persisted in disobedience. One complete revelation followed the other, the latter amplifying, enlarging, and making clear the former revelation.*BSPC 121.5*

In the study of God’s revelation in the New Testament we return to an important consideration that was discussed in earlier chapters of this book, namely, the relation of the New Testament to the Old

Testament. But brief mention will be made of this at this time.*BSPC 121.6*

The New Testament is God's divine commentary on the Old Testament. In this section of Holy Scripture we are enabled to see the teaching of Old Testament days through the divine magnifying glass. It was said concerning the Savior at His advent that He would "magnify the law." (*Isaiah 42:21*.) Beholding the truth of the Old Testament through Christ Jesus the Lord, we are able to see so many of its beauties, which without Him we should never be able to see. He does for the Old Testament what the magnifying glass does for our poor limited vision when we look through the lens and gaze at some of the minute, almost invisible things in nature. He does not add anything to the word; on the other hand, He reveals that which without His aid would be hidden from our gaze.*BSPC 121.7*

Important Conclusions

Now that we have considered these divine revelations as successive, each one that followed amplifying the one or the others that went before, let us think of some things involved in this fact. Let us go back in point of time to that period in Israel when the prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others, ministered to the people of God. Was it not probable that there were people of that time who, in theory at least, treasured the writings of Moses and regarded them in a special way as God's revelation, but who resented the new prophetic messages because they cut across their pathway? Might they not have said, "We have Moses; we accept and believe Moses and Moses only"? Might it not have been the same in the days of the apostles, that when they came with definite messages from Heaven the Jews of their day would reason in the same way? It would have been natural for them, opposed as they were to the preaching of the apostles, to say, "We have the Old Testament. That is complete. We accept and believe the Old Testament and the Old Testament only." But would they have been justified in this attitude? Is there not the same danger facing the people of God today? Might there not be a tendency to say the same thing? Has it not been said, "We believe the Bible and the Bible only; we do not need any messages from the prophets"? *BSPC 121.8*

Let us ever remember that in ancient days God's prophets had a divinely appointed place in His plan. They did not alter the previous revelations, but they did call attention to them and amplify them. This is the relationship that exists between the Spirit of prophecy and the Bible in the Advent Movement. *BSPC 122.1*

The testimony of the messenger of the Lord is very clear on this point, as will be seen in the following paragraphs: *BSPC 122.2*

"The word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the word of God their study are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing

them back to the word that they have neglected to follow.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 2:454, 455.BSPC 122.3

“The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles.”*Testimonies for the Church* 4:323.BSPC 122.4

“The word of God is plain and close in its restrictions; it interferes with your selfish indulgence; therefore you do not obey it. The testimonies of His Spirit call your attention to the Scriptures.”*Testimonies for the Church* 5:234.BSPC 122.5

“The Testimonies are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all.”*Testimonies for the Church* 2:606.BSPC 123.1

“Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 2:605.BSPC 123.2

Mrs. S. M. I. Henry beautifully expressed this relationship after she found her way into the fuller light of the Spirit of God. We read:*BSPC* 123.3

“The manifestation of the power of the Spirit of God was as clear as sunlight; and in that light I saw the Testimony as simply a lens through which to look at the truth. It at once grew from a lens to a telescope, a perfect, beautiful telescope, subject to all telescopic conditions and limitations, directed toward the field of the heavens, —that field, the Bible.*BSPC* 123.4

“Clouds may intervene between it and a heaven full of stars; clouds of unbelief, of contention. Satan may blow tempests all about it; it may be blurred by the breath of our own selfishness. The dust of superstition may gather upon it; we may meddle with it, and turn it aside from the field; it may be pointed away toward empty space; it may be turned end for end, so that everything is so diminished that we can recognize nothing. We may change the focus so that

everything is distorted out of all harmonious proportions, and made hideous: it may be so shortened that a great piece of opaque glass shall appear to our gaze. If the lens is mistaken for the field, we can receive but a very narrow conception of the most magnificent spectacle with which the heavens ever invited our gaze. But in its proper office as a medium of enlarged and clearer vision, as a telescope the Testimony has a wonderfully beautiful and holy office.*BSPC 123.5*

“Everything depends upon our relation to it and the use which we make of it. In itself it is only a glass through which to look, but in the hand of the divine Director, properly mounted, set at the right angle. And adjusted to the eye of the observer, with a field clear of clouds, it will reveal truth such as will quicken the blood, gladden the heart, and open a wide door of expectation. It will reduce nebulae to constellations; faraway points of light to planets of the first magnitude, and to suns burning with glory. The failure has been in understanding what the Testimonies are and how to use them. They are not the heavens palpitating with countless orbs of truth, but they do lead the eye and give it power to penetrate into the glories of the mysterious living word of God.*BSPC 123.6*

“This has been the most beautiful experience which has ever been granted me. It grows on me from day to day.”—The Gospel Herald, January, 1898, pp. 25, 26.*BSPC 123.7*

But there is another important consideration to which we should give study. When we read the Old Testament writings we become aware of the fact that there were many prophets whom God sent to Israel, whose writings and messages were not incorporated in the Sacred Volume. It is important that we recognize this, for such recognition will help us to appreciate the relationship God’s prophets sustained to the Holy Scriptures. All the prophets in this particular class cannot be listed, but attention is called to a few:*BSPC 124.1*

Iddo	<i>2 Chronicles 13:22</i>	Azariah	<i>2 Chronicles 15:1</i>
Jehu	<i>2 Chronicles 20:34</i>	Azur	<i>Jeremiah 28:1</i>
Shemaiah	<i>2 Chronicles 12:15</i>	Oded	<i>2 Chronicles 15:8</i>
Ahijah	<i>2 Chronicles 9:29</i>	Jeduthun	<i>2 Chronicles 35:15</i>

Gad *1 Chronicles 29:29* Heman *1 Chronicles 25:5*
Micaiah *1 Kings 22:8, 9* Hananiah *Jeremiah 28:17*

All these were God's servants. They were called just as surely as other prophets were called. They were just as divinely appointed to their sacred office as were those prophets whose writings were incorporated in the Scriptures. It is evident, then, that in those days God had among His servants the prophets many who were in no way connected with making up "the volume of the book." Seeing that they were called of God to exercise this important ministry, were not their messages and those of the other prophets of equal value? The prophet Nathan was certainly called of God when he went to David and pointed out his sin, yet no book he ever wrote found its way into the Sacred Canon.*BSPC 124.2*

What lesson might we learn from this? Is it not a fact that if God had His recognized prophets in those days, whose messages were not permanently recorded in the Sacred Oracles, could He not have prophets in the church doing a similar work today? Those prophets in ancient days were called by God to specific service, and if they rendered that service faithfully, they were just as accepted of God as were the prophets whose writings ultimately found a place in the canon of the Scriptures.*BSPC 124.3*

Why the Testimonies Were Given

From what has been presented thus far it will be observed that each revelation, as seen in the four sections of Holy Writ, really enlarges and makes plain the revelation or revelations that went before. This was the case with the writings of the prophets in relation to the books of Moses; it was the same in the case of the New Testament in relation to the Old Testament. God's gift of the Spirit of prophecy to the remnant church sustains precisely the same relationship. It calls attention to the divine revelations already given and seeks to make plain the truth of those revelations to the hearts of men. It follows, therefore, that if God's people had rightly appreciated His Holy Word, if they had followed its counsels and allowed it to mold and guide their lives, they would never have needed the Testimonies.*BSPC 124.4*

This has been stressed by Mrs. E. G. White, as will be seen in the following paragraphs:*BSPC 125.1*

"If the people who now profess to be God's peculiar treasure would obey His requirements, as specified in His word, special testimonies would not be given to awaken them to their duty and impress upon them their sinfulness and their fearful danger in neglecting to obey the word of God."*Testimonies for the Church 2:607.BSPC 125.2*

"God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the Testimonies. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the Testimonies. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey. And urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings.*BSPC 125.3*

"The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His word. The written testimonies are not to give new

light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's word; yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse....*BSPC 125.4*

"I referred them to ancient Israel. God gave them His law, but they would not obey it. He then gave them ceremonies and ordinances, that in the performance of these, God might be kept in remembrance. They were so prone to forget Him and His claims upon them that it was necessary to keep their minds stirred up to realize their obligations to obey and honor their Creator. Had they been obedient, and loved to keep God's commandments, the multitude of ceremonies and ordinances would not have been required."—*Testimonies for the Church 2:605-607.BSPC 125.5*

Danger in Rejecting the Testimonies

God's people today have the privilege of learning many lessons from the experience of ancient Israel. On so many occasions, when counsels came from the Lord through His servants the prophets, the people turned a deaf ear to them; they shrugged their shoulders; they neglected to give heed to the solemn warnings. Time after time not only did apostasy follow but also tragic national disaster. In this connection we would do well to recall some of the earnest counsel given by God's messenger to the remnant church. Note the following pertinent paragraphs:*BSPC 126.1*

"It is Satan's plan to weaken the faith of God's people in the Testimonies. Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction."*Testimonies for the Church 4:211.BSPC 126.2*

"Let the Testimonies be judged by their fruits. What is the spirit of their teaching? What has been the result of their influence? All who desire to do so can acquaint themselves with the fruits of these visions. For seventeen years God has seen fit to let them survive and strengthen against the opposition of Satan's forces and the influence of human agencies that have aided Satan in his work."*BSPC 126.3*

"God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work ... bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil."*BSPC 126.4*

"As the Lord has manifested Himself through the spirit of prophecy, 'past, present, and future have passed before me. I have been shown faces that I had never seen, and years afterward I knew

them when I saw them. I have been aroused from my sleep with a vivid sense of subjects previously presented to my mind; and I have written, at midnight, letters that have gone across the continent and, arriving at a crisis, have saved great disaster to the cause of God. This has been my work for many years. A power has impelled me to reprove and rebuke wrongs that I had not thought of. Is this work...from above or from beneath?" *Testimonies for the Church* 5:671.BSPC 126.5

Chapter 9—The Tests and the Purpose of the Spirit of Prophecy

“Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21.BSPC 127.1

Throughout the ages the church of God has been beset by impostors. Especially in times of revival the tendency has been to fanaticism; in times of lethargy false doctrines and speculative theories have found a fruitful soil. The history of the church throughout the centuries has been one of constant warfare with hostile interests, both within and without the church. When God has worked mightily in the hearts of men, so many times false prophets have arisen, and sad to say, in many instances, have led away many from the truth of God.*BSPC 127.2*

At various times God warned His church against those who presumed thus to speak in His name. The leadership of the church in Old Testament days had to face this problem. Through Jeremiah the Lord said:*BSPC 127.3*

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.” “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” *Jeremiah 23:16, 21.BSPC 127.4*

It was the same in the days of the early church. The Savior warned against these false emissaries.*BSPC 127.5*

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” *Matthew 7:15.BSPC 127.6*

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” *Matthew 24:11.BSPC 127.7*

The apostle Peter mentioned them as coming within the field of his ministry. “But there were false prophets also among the people.” *2 Peter 2:1.BSPC 128.1*

Notice also the warning of the apostle John:*BSPC 128.2*

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”
1 John 4:1.BSPC 128.3

These warnings, however, are significant, not only because they put the church on the alert against prophets whom God had not sent, but because their mention indicates the fact that God had true prophets. Were this not so, God need not have warned against “false prophets”; all He needed to do was to warn against “prophets.” But the very mention of “false” prophets presumes that there would be “true” prophets.*BSPC 128.4*

It is in view of this development in the church that the counsel at the beginning of this chapter was necessary. It is vital that we try the spirits and prove all things, at the same time seeking God for spiritual discernment to tell the true from the false. Then as the Lord leads us into truth, we can rejoice in the ministry that spiritual gifts bring to our hearts.*BSPC 128.5*

How God Revealed Himself to His Prophets

Very early in the history of the Hebrews, God gave explicit instruction as to how He would reveal Himself to His servants the prophets. We read:*BSPC 128.6*

“If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” *Numbers 12:6.BSPC 128.7*

An improvement in the rendering of this text would read, “If there be a prophet of the Lord among you, I will make myself known.” God is not speaking of any prophet, but only of His own prophets. Here, however, reference is made to both visions and dreams as the channels by or through which the Lord communicates His message to His servants. Usually dreams come in connection with the hours of repose, and in the main we should associate them with the night hours. Visions, on the other hand, might take place at night, but quite often in the Scriptures they were given to the prophets during the day.*BSPC 128.8*

It is true we read that “God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night” (*Genesis 46:2*); that the secret was revealed unto Daniel in a “night vision” (*Daniel 2:19*). And Daniel himself tells us what he saw “in the night visions.” (*Daniel 7:11*) The apostle Paul also had the experience as recorded in the book of Acts: “A vision appeared to Paul in the night” (*Acts 16:9*); and later the Lord spoke “to Paul in the night by a vision” (*Acts 18:9*). So there had been some visions given to God’s servants in the night watches, but generally it was dreams that were given during the dark hours. We read expressions like “in a dream by night” in many places. Note the following: *Genesis 20:3; 28:11, 12; 31:24; 40:5; 41:7, 11; 1 Kings 3:5; Psalm 73:20; Daniel 2:1, 3; 4:5; Matthew 27:19.BSPC 129.1*

Visions were quite often given to the prophets during their waking hours, and naturally they would come, in the main at least, in daylight. The following are a few of such visions:*BSPC 129.2*

Given to Daniel in the Palace

He was surrounded by the officers of state in the palace when he had this vision. He says:*BSPC 129.3*

“And Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision.” *Daniel 10:7, 8.BSPC 129.4*

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, in narrating the effect of the vision on the officers of state who were with Daniel, gives the following graphic description:*BSPC 129.5*

“Though they saw not the vision, they were seized with an unaccountable trembling.... Now the fright that Daniel’s attendants were in is a confirmation of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel’s fancy, or the product of a heated imagination of his own, for it had a real, powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.... He himself saw it, and saw it alone.”—Volume 2, p. 985.*BSPC 129.6*

Given to Paul on the Damascus Road

This was given at the time of his conversion, when he was known as Saul. It was a vision of the day. He was on his way to Damascus to persecute the members of the early Christian faith when he was arrested by the Lord in broad daylight. In this vision “the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.” *Acts 9:7*. Later in telling of his experience he said, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” *Acts 26:19.BSPC 129.7*

Given to Ezekiel Before the Elders

On one occasion Ezekiel had a vision when he sat in his own house in the company of the elders of Judah. It seems as though they were gathered in conference, counseling about the work of God. At that time, right in the presence of this assembly, he was given a vision of the Lord. (*Ezekiel 8A, 2, et cetera.*)*BSPC 130.1*

Given to Cornelius in the Afternoon

This godly officer in the Roman Army was given a vision “about the ninth hour of the day.” (*Acts 10:3*.) This would be about three o’clock in the afternoon. Here again is a vision given in full daylight.*BSPC 130.2*

Evidently at times that which was given to God’s prophets partook of the nature of both a dream and a vision. We read, for instance, concerning Nebuchadnezzar: “Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed” (*Daniel 2:28*); also the statement of Isaiah about “a dream of a night vision” (*Isaiah 29:7*).*BSPC 130.3*

Generally, however, we might regard a dream as an occurrence of the night, whereas a vision is something granted during the day.*BSPC 130.4*

The visions that came to the prophets during the day were known as “open” visions, and that, doubtless, because they were quite often in the presence of others, as was the case of Daniel in the royal court and of Ezekiel in his own home with the elders of Israel. Some translations, instead of the word “open,” convey the idea of something that was “manifest” or “distinct.” The original Hebrew word here rendered “open” is rendered quite generally by expressions like “to break forth,” “to pour forth,” et cetera. It is rendered just this once by the word “open.” Hence, we conclude that an open vision was one not necessarily experienced during the light hours but one experienced in full view of other individuals.*BSPC 130.5*

We Are to Prove the Gift

The divine counsel is that we are to “prove all things” (*1 Thessalonians 5:21*) and also to “try the spirits” (*1 John 4:1*). Some are inclined to reject rather hastily any claims to the prophetic gift, but the Lord tells us to “despise not prophesyings.” (*1 Thessalonians 5:20*.) The word “prophesyings” here refers not to actual “prophecies.” Prophecies result from the exercise of the prophetic gift, and it is the exercise of the gift itself to which reference is made in this text. It is the act of “prophesying” that the apostle has in mind. It is the same word that is rendered “the gift of prophecy” in *1 Corinthians 13:2*. *BSPC 130.6*

There is a great danger that if we despise prophesyings, we “quench” the Spirit of God. After all, this is one way God manifests Himself to the church of Christ. The Greek word rendered “despise” is otherwise rendered “set at nought” (*Acts 4:11*); and in the various English translations we find such words used as “scorn,” “spurn,” or “disdain.” Moffatt uses the last-named word in his translation as follows: “Never disdain prophetic revelations.” This is good counsel. Remember that Israel turned a deaf ear to the appeals of Jehovah, and they disregarded the messages of His servants the prophets. *BSPC 131.1*

How careful we need to be to see that we do not “quench” the Spirit of the Lord. In other passages of Scripture we are told that an adverse attitude to the call of God means that we “resist” the Spirit (*Acts 7:51*), and so “vex” (*Isaiah 63:10*), or “grieve,” the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 4:30*). *BSPC 131.2*

The Tests

In the Divine Word, God has given certain rules by which His people may test the claims of those who feel they have any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of such tests, so far as the prophet of God is concerned, is that of miracles. Usually through the centuries men have resorted to the spectacular in order to justify their claims. Surely, men say, if a miracle is wrought, this is certain evidence that the message is of God. But we must remember that false prophets can work miracles. This is emphasized very strongly in the Bible. We see it in the counsel of Jesus:*BSPC 131.3*

“There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” *Matthew 24:24.BSPC 131.4*

The revelator also reminds us that in the last days the powers of evil will deceive “them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.” *Revelation 13:14*. So we need to be on our guard in this respect. It seems that miracles, after all, are not a final test of the genuineness of the prophet. In the centuries long ago Jehovah gave instruction to His people:*BSPC 131.5*

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass. Whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou has not known, and let us serve them. Thou shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proves you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him.” *Deuteronomy 13:14.BSPC 132.1*

Here, then, is a vital test: Does the one with prophetic claims teach us to disobey the law of God? Does he make little of God’s requirements? Does he set aside the commandment of God and substitute something based merely on tradition? If so, we are counseled not to follow him, even though he may perform many

outstanding and imposing wonders. The divine counsel is, Do not believe, and do not follow him.*BSPC 132.2*

Our minds are directed in this consideration to John the Baptist, whom the Savior tells us was the greatest prophet that ever lived.*BSPC 132.3*

“For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” *Luke 7:28.BSPC 132.4*

Yet the same Savior tells us that “John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this man were true.” *John 10:41*. Here, then, is another vital test, something to be seen, not in miracles or ostentatious wonders, but in speaking and proclaiming the truth of God.*BSPC 132.5*

Some of the Physical Tests of a Prophet

There are also what might be called physical and spiritual tests of the prophet of God. In these paragraphs those of a more physical nature will be considered. Looking through the records of the past, and especially the writings of the Bible prophets concerning the work and experience of God's holy servants, we find here and there certain characteristics of the prophet of the Lord when in vision. We have already observed that some of these messengers of the Most High had such visions in the public assembly or in their own homes while others were around them, but there are other distinguishing marks that we shall notice. When a prophet actually goes into vision, and while he is in vision, the following features should be observed:*BSPC 132.6*

1. He Loses All His Natural Strength

Daniel's testimony concerning this particular feature of his experience is given in the following expressions: "There remained no strength in me." *Daniel 10:8*. "I retained no strength." *Verse 8*. "I have retained no strength." *Verse 16*. "There remained no strength in me." *Verse 17*.*BSPC 133.1*

Having been deprived of his strength, Daniel would naturally fall, perhaps gently, to the ground. This is evidently what happened, for in *verse 9* we find him "in a deep sleep" with his "face toward the ground." Then, he said, an angelic "hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." *Verse 10*. The margin of the Revised translation gives the wording, "He set me tottering upon my knees." This condition characterized Balaam also, for we read in entering a vision that he "saw the vision of the Almighty, falling." *Numbers 24:4*. The text in the Authorized Version reads "falling into a trance," but it will be observed that the words "in a trance" are supplied and hence not in the original text. The thought is that of actually falling to the ground, and it is expressed by Rotherham as he "falls down"; Goodspeed as "prostrate"; the Douay as "falls." The same thing happened to Saul, afterward called Paul, in the vision on the road to Damascus. Though the record does not say he fell to the earth, it does say that "Saul arose from the earth." (*Acts 9:8*).*BSPC 133.2*

A good statement concerning this physical condition as found in one of the Jewish writings is as follows:*BSPC 133.3*

“All the time when they had the prophetic experience, their limbs trembled, their physical strength failed them, their thoughts became confused; and the mind was left free to comprehend the vision it saw.”—MAIMONIDES, *The Mishneh Torah* (known as the *Yad Hachazakah*), Book I. Edited and translated by Moses Hyamson (New York: Bloch, 1937), p. 42b.*BSPC 133.4*

2. He Is Supernaturally Strengthened

In Daniel’s further testimony as to what happened to him in vision, he tells us what the angel did after he lost his natural strength: “He strengthened me.” *Daniel 10:18*. “I was strengthened.” *Verse 19*. “Thou has strengthened me.” *Verse 19*. “Be strong, yea, be strong.” *Verse 19*.*BSPC 133.5*

In making His servants the prophets fit channels for the transmission of the divine message, God deprives them of everything that might indicate human strength and power; then He Himself empowers them with His own strength, and so the more effectively can He use them as He desires.*BSPC 134.1*

3. He Has His Eyes Open

This is expressed twice in recording the experience of the prophet Balaam: “Whose eyes are open.” *Numbers 24:1* “Having his eyes open.” *Verse 4*. This undoubtedly refers to the spiritual as well as the physical sight; both are open.*BSPC 134.2*

4. He Does Not Breathe

This is an unusual physical characteristic of the prophet, and Daniel in his prophecy referred to this when he said, “Neither is there breath left in me.” *Daniel 10:17*.*BSPC 134.3*

It seems that there can be very little dispute as to the wording of this text, for practically all the translations agree with the thought expressed in the foregoing text. The Douay Version gives,

“moreover my breath is stopped.” We are here face to face with a remarkable phenomenon, that of a man speaking and moving as the prophet did in vision, and yet with no breath in his body. We need not, however, be surprised at this; for after all, God can just as well keep a man alive without breathing as He could with breathing. This was one of the miracles wrought when the prophets of God had these “open” visions. So different were the prophets of God from the false prophets of their day. The impostors might go into a trance and be possessed of evil spirits, but the prophet of the Lord, when in vision, was a constant miracle of the wonder-working power of the mighty God of Israel. And as such he was possessed of the Divine Spirit speaking the message of God in and through him.*BSPC 134.4*

5. He Speaks Without Breathing

This is listed here in this connection, but the matter has already been dealt with in the foregoing paragraph.*BSPC 134.5*

6. His Tongue Is Controlled by the Lord

Because the Lord has strengthened the prophet and empowered him with His own Spirit, naturally it is God who speaks through him. David declared, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue.” *2 Samuel 23:2.BSPC 134.6*

In the light of this consideration the expression in 2 Timothy has particular force and cogency. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” *2 Timothy 3:16*. Rotherham renders this, “Every Scripture is God-breathed.” How significant! The prophet loses all natural strength; he is supernaturally strengthened. He ceases to breathe, yet God breathes through him. So the messages that come are “God-breathed.” God takes the human vehicle and through him breathes his own message to men.*BSPC 135.1*

7. He Is Unconscious of His Surroundings

One might conclude that the prophet, in ecstatic vision, would be unconscious of his surroundings. Notice how the apostle Paul describes his own condition when in vision:*BSPC 135.2*

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body I cannot tell: God knows;) how that he was caught up into paradise." 2 *Corinthians 12:2-4.BSPC 135.3*

As to the manifestation of these characteristics in the experience of Mrs. E. G. White in her earlier visions, note the following testimonies. One of the most comprehensive descriptions of her in vision is that given by James White, in 1868:*BSPC 135.4*

"Her condition in vision may be described as follows:*BSPC 135.5*

"1. She is utterly unconscious of everything transpiring around her, as has been proved by the most rigid tests, but views herself as removed from this world, and in the presence of heavenly beings.*BSPC 135.6*

"2. She does not breathe. During the entire period of her continuance in vision, which has at different times ranged from fifteen minutes to three hours, there is no breath, as has been repeatedly proved by pressing upon the chest, and by closing the mouth and nostrils.*BSPC 135.7*

"3. Immediately on entering vision, her muscles become rigid, and joints fixed, so far as any external force can influence them. At the same time her movements and gestures, which are frequent, are free and graceful, and cannot be hindered nor controlled by the strongest person.*BSPC 135.8*

"4. On coming out of vision, whether in the day-time or a well lighted room at night, all is total darkness. Her power to distinguish even the most brilliant objects, held within a few inches of the eyes, returns but gradually, sometimes not being fully established for three hours. This has continued for the past twenty years; yet her eyesight is not in the least impaired, few persons having better than she now possesses.*BSPC 135.9*

"She has probably had, during the past twenty-three years, between one and two hundred visions. These have been given under almost

every variety of circumstance, yet maintaining a wonderful similarity; the most apparent change being, that of late years they have grown less frequent, but more comprehensive. She has been taken off in vision most frequently when bowed in prayer. Several times, while earnestly addressing the congregation, unexpectedly to herself and to all around her, she has been instantly prostrated in vision.”—James White, *Life Incidents in Connection With the Great Advent Movement*, pp. 272, 273.*BSPC 136.1*

F. M. Wilcox has well expressed the matter as follows:*BSPC 136.2*

“The physical manifestations in many of her visions correspond to the experience of the prophets of old. We refer to the physical manifestations under which many of these visions were given, similar to the experience of Daniel and other prophets of the Old Testament.*BSPC 136.3*

“We do not, however, regard these physical manifestations as the principal convincing evidences of the divine call to Mrs. White. Rather, they constitute subsidiary or contributing evidences. The great proof of her call to divine ministry was shown in the answer of her work to prophetic prediction; in the spirit which characterized her ministry throughout the years. In the correspondence of her teachings to those of the Bible. In the marked manner in which she was used of God to save His church in many crises. And by the fruit her ministry bore through all the years of her earthly life and which is still appearing as a result of her labors.”—The Review and Herald, January 19, 1950.*BSPC 136.4*

Some of the Spiritual Tests of the Prophet of God

There are many features to distinguish the true prophet from those that make false claims to the prophetic office. These are outlined in the Divine Word, and we might notice the following.*BSPC 136.5*

True prophets will—*BSPC 136.6*

Exalt the true God. *Deuteronomy 13:14.BSPC 136.7*

Teach in harmony with the word of God. *Isaiah 8:20.BSPC 136.8*

Encourage obedience to the commandments of God. *2 Chronicles 24:19, 20; Revelation 12:17.BSPC 136.9*

Confess that Christ is come in the flesh. *1 John 4:2, 3.BSPC 136.10*

Be led by the Spirit of God. *1 Peter 1:10, 11; 2 Peter 1:19.BSPC 136.11*

Be known by their good fruits. *Matthew 7:15-20.BSPC 136.12*

Speak in harmony with the Sabbath of the Lord. *Isaiah 56:1-6.BSPC 136.13*

F. M. Wilcox has very concisely set forth the evidences of Mrs. White's divine call:*BSPC 137.1*

"1. Mrs. White's teachings are in harmony with the great standard of all truth and doctrine, the Holy Scriptures. If she was possessed of the gift of the Spirit, in the very nature of the case this would be so. A lack of harmony between her teachings and the teachings of the Bible would indicate that her claims were false.*BSPC 137.2*

"2. Her writings are not set forth as an addition to the Sacred Canon. On the contrary, their object is to exalt that Word. The great principles of truth expressed in the Bible have been drawn out in finer detail and applied to the various phases of Christian life and experience.*BSPC 137.3*

"3. On many occasions, in striking instances and in marvelous ways, God used His messenger to save His church in severe crises

from mistakes or divisions, and to safeguard His people from specious error in doctrine or in Christian experience.*BSPC 137.4*

“4. She showed throughout her entire experience deep spiritual vision and strength of character in the active part she bore in the development of every phase of the Second Advent Movement. Her testimony was and is a ringing call to deeper consecration, to the putting away of sin, to the enthronement of Christ in the heart, to more active Christian service in the homeland and in the great mission fields. Her life and labors proved a mighty incentive to the carrying of the gospel message to earth’s remotest bounds.*BSPC 137.5*

“5. Her messages make a direct appeal to the heart, and are proving in thousands of lives a transforming power, and an inspiration to Christian service.*BSPC 137.6*

“6. Her life and Christian experience conformed to the pure, simple, dignified principles of the gospel of Christ. She exemplified in her own life, as does every true prophet, the principles of truth she taught to others.”—*Ibid.**BSPC 137.7*

The Purpose of the Gifts

God in His mercy has given the Holy Spirit to the church, and in His Holy Word He has clearly indicated some of the specific blessings this heavenly gift will bring in preparing a people for entrance into the kingdom of God. In his Gospel, John mentions several important experiences that come to the church “when the Comforter is come.” Let us observe:*BSPC 137.8*

He will teach you all things. *John 14:26* He will bring My words to remembrance. *John 14:26*. He will testify of Me. *John 15:26*. He will reprove of sin. *John 16:8*. He will convict of sin. *John 16:8*, margin.

He will guide you into all truth. *John 16:13*. He will reveal the future. *John 16:13*.

Emphasis is laid upon the fact that these blessings will be seen “when the Comforter is come”. (*John 15:26*). “When he [the Spirit] is come” (*John 16:8*), “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come” (*verse 13*), with the advent of the Comforter, “the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name” (*John 14:26*).*BSPC 138.1*

More specifically we might observe the purpose of the prophetic gift in the church of God, as it is—*BSPC 138.2*

1. Related to individuals

a. To David; God sent the prophet Nathan with a special message, which brought conviction to the heart of David and led him to humble confession before God. (*2 Samuel 12:1-7*).*BSPC 138.3*

b. To Paul; The prophet Agabus indicated to Paul what would happen to him on his journey to Jerusalem. (*Acts 21:10-12*).*BSPC 138.4*

c. To Cornelius; The Spirit of God in vision directed Peter to a longing soul, to a man searching for the truth of God. (*Acts 10*).*BSPC 138.5*

2. Related to crises

a. In the case of the apostle Paul and the shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea. Paul received a vision from God giving direction in this crisis. (*Acts 27:23, 24.*)*BSPC 138.6*

b. In the case of Jehoshaphat and the battle with the enemies of Israel. God sent His prophet Jahaziel with a message of counsel which, when obeyed, wrought a remarkable deliverance. (2 *Chronicles 20:14, 20.*)*BSPC 138.7*

c. In the case of the council at Antioch. (*Acts 15.*)*BSPC 138.8*

Although Judas and Silas did not make the decision that was reached at this general council, they were in attendance, and their influence meant much to the body of believers.*BSPC 138.9*

3. Related to the church

(Mention was made earlier in this chapter of the work in general of the Spirit of God in the church, but in this classification attention will be drawn to a few specific instances of His work through the gift of prophecy in directing the activities of the church.)*BSPC 138.10*

a. In the choice of Saul. (*Acts 9:10.*)*BSPC 139.1*

God moved in the conversion of Saul by direct intervention, also in directing Saul to the organized church. This was done by the gift of prophecy. Even Ananias, who was chosen by the Lord to convey His message to Saul, received his direction in a vision from the Lord.*BSPC 139.2*

b. In carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. (*Acts 10:9, 10.*) These texts record the story of the vision given to Peter, also the vision given to Cornelius. In this way God directed His church to the open door of the Gentile world.*BSPC 139.3*

c. In indicating the time to open work in new areas. (*Acts 16:9.*)*BSPC 139.4*

The apostles in all good faith were bound toward a special field of service, but the Spirit of God intervened, and directed them to go in another direction—to Macedonia.*BSPC 139.5*

Similar experiences have come to the remnant church through the ministry of the prophetic gift. The counsel that has come to God's work, especially in its formative years, and also in the days of worldwide expansion, has been of inestimable blessing.*BSPC 139.6*

May we pray as did David, the sweet singer of Israel, centuries ago: "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies." *Psalm 119:36.BSPC 139.7*

Then shall we be able to testify with him:*BSPC 139.8*

"Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever." *Verse 111. I have kept thy testimonies." Verse 22.BSPC 139.9*

"Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors." *Verse 24.BSPC 139.10*

"Thy testimonies are my meditation." *Verse 99.BSPC 139.11*

There will then well up in our hearts the joy and satisfaction of genuine fellowship with the Lord, and we shall be able to say:*BSPC 139.12*

"I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies." *Verse 14.BSPC 139.13*

"Therefore I love thy testimonies." *Verse 119.BSPC 139.14*

And we shall know to the fullest extent what the promise of the Lord means when He says, "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." *Verse 2.BSPC 139.15*

Part Three

Chapter 10—The Nature of the Church of Christ

The church of God on earth is the object of His most tender solicitude and deepest regard. The apostle to the Gentiles beautifully expressed this when, in writing to the church at Ephesus, he reminded them that “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” *Ephesians 5:25.BSPC 139.16*

No wonder God loves and cherishes His church; it cost something: it meant paying an infinite price, for He “gave himself for it.” We read also of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” *Acts 20:28.BSPC 139.17*

The word rendered “cherished” is used in but one other place in the New Testament, and in this Paul expresses himself in affectionate terms as he writes to his children in the faith.*BSPC 139.18*

“In our relations to you we showed ourselves as gentle as a mother is when she tenderly nurses her own children.” *1 Thessalonians 2:7, Weymouth.BSPC 139.19*

Even in Old Testament days Jehovah revealed Himself to His people, and showed that He loved them with an “everlasting love.” (*Jeremiah 31:3.*) It was manifested over and over again in all His dealings with them. They were reminded of His deep regard for them even in the garments of the high priest. On his heart he carried their names as he went in before the Lord. Yes, the congregation of His saints here below is something for which God has a deep and abiding love.*BSPC 139.20*

“Nothing else in this world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care. Nothing so offends God as an act that injures the influence of those who are doing His service.”*Testimonies for the Church 6:42.BSPC 139.21*

We need ever to bear in mind that God is jealous of His church. It is very precious in His sight; for it He has an infinite love.*BSPC 139.22*

“The church is very precious in God’s sight. He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 298.BSPC 141.1

Whatever may happen to the church in this vale of tears, God will never forsake her. She may be persecuted, her members may be confined to the dungeon, they may suffer untold hardships, they may even be put to death for the truth’s sake, but come what may, God will never leave or forsake His people.BSPC 141.2

“Through the centuries of persecution, conflict, and darkness, God has sustained His church. Not one cloud has fallen upon it that He has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counter work His work, that He has not foreseen. All has taken place as He predicted. He has not left His church forsaken.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 11, 12.BSPC 141.3

One of the most encouraging and comforting promises God has given to His church is found in *Hebrews 13:5*. There the Lord assures His people, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”BSPC 141.4

Let us seek to catch the inspiration of the truth that is here presented. The two words “leave” and “forsake” are important. The one means “to neglect to care for” (*1 Samuel 9:5*), “to cease from,” “to relax in vigilance”; the other, “to leave behind” (*Isaiah 1:9*), “to let one down,” “to leave in the lurch” (*Hebrews 13:5*). Moulton and Milligan in their Greek vocabularies of the New Testament tell us that the prevailing idea of the word “forsake” is that of “leaving in the lurch anyone who is in straits.” This our God will never do. Then again notice the negatives, “I will never leave thee” and “I will never forsake thee.” In our English Bible this wording conveys something of the strength and force of this wonderful promise of God. In the Greek text, however, there are added power and cogency. In the first expression, “I will never leave thee,” there are two negatives; in the second expression, “I will never forsake thee,” there are three negatives. Furthermore, God has pledged Himself to the fulfillment of His word. It is not merely “God hath said”; the expression here is

intensive, and reads, "God himself hath said." So we have one of the most wonderful promises of God's protecting and providential care expressed in these words. We might read the promise, "God himself hath said, I will not leave thee, yea, I will not forsake thee." No wonder the Spirit of prophecy gives us the following assuring words:*BSPC 141.5*

"Will Christ, our representative and head, close His heart, or withdraw His hand, or falsify His promise? No; never, never."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 20.BSPC 142.1*

The Meaning of the Church

The word church is used quite loosely at times, some even applying it to the edifice where believers may meet for worship. Such a structure may be a church building or something that serves for the purpose of assembly, but it certainly could not be the “church.” The church is composed of individuals who are “called out” from the world. They heed the call to come out, and then find a home in what the Scriptures designate the “church.” The church, then, is made up of living persons banded together in Christian fellowship. It is composed of those who espouse the cause of Christ, who believe in the teachings of Jesus, and who pledge themselves to propagate “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” *BSPC 142.2*

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, and really means “assembly.” The word is so rendered in *Acts 19:32, 39, 41*. This word is used also in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and is rendered “assembly” in *Deuteronomy 18:16* and *2 Chronicles 30:23*; and “congregation” in *Psalms 22:22* and *107:32*. *BSPC 142.3*

The word “church” is a term used to characterize God’s people, not only in New Testament days, but also in the days of Moses and David. Luke in his story in the book of Acts calls attention to “the church in the wilderness” at the time the Angel of the covenant was leading the children of the Most High. (*Acts 7:38*.) It is referred to in the songs of Israel, where we read, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.” *Psalms 89:7*. The word “assembly” in this text is from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which in the New Testament is generally rendered “church.” *BSPC 142.4*

The Scope of the Church

God's church has an even wider significance than in its application to men and women gathered out of this world of sin; it applies also to the millions of the angelic host. In the book of Hebrews the writer pictures "an innumerable company of angels" and "the general assembly and church of the firstborn." The latter expression refers to God's church on earth, to those whose names are written in heaven; the expression "the innumerable company of angels" has reference to a large assembly of angels in the courts above. The Authorized Version hardly indicates this, but the Greek text does. The Interlinear translation renders this phrase "to millions of angels, [the] universal gathering." *BSPC 142.5*

The thought that God has a church on earth and a church in heaven is expressed in the writings of the Spirit of prophecy as follows: *BSPC 143.1*

"The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth."—*Testimonies for the Church 6:366.BSPC 143.2*

God plans to exhibit His victorious church to the unfallen worlds throughout the days of eternity. Even now the church is a spectacle and a wonder to the hosts above. *BSPC 143.3*

"The angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the powers commissioned to cooperate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing character after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 18.BSPC 143.4*

But throughout the endless ages they will be an eternal evidence of God's mighty power to save. The church will reveal to the hosts of angel beings, as well as to the inhabitants of those sinless realms,

the glory and power of that matchless redemption which is in Christ
Jesus our Lord!*BSPC 143.5*

The Foundation of the Church

The church of God is built upon a solid foundation. It could not be otherwise. The church is the church of God, and if it is God's church, it is His property; it surely would have a foundation as enduring as He Himself. One could not conceive of anything but this. Nothing earthly, nothing sinful, nothing ephemeral, could provide a foundation for the church of the living God; only God Himself could provide and be such a foundation. This was clearly emphasized by Christ Jesus in His talk with Peter and the apostles when He was here on earth.*BSPC 143.6*

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *Matthew 16:18.BSPC 144.1*

It is upon the Rock that the church of Christ is to be founded. The people of God in the days of Jesus were well acquainted with this expression as it applied to Jehovah. It is to be found repeatedly in the Scriptures of truth. "He is the Rock" (*Deuteronomy 32:4*); He is "the Rock of his salvation" (*verse 15*); He is "the Rock of Israel" (*2 Samuel 23:3*); He is "the rock that is higher than I" (*Psalms 61:2*); He is the "rock of ages" (*Isaiah 26:4*, margin). He is the Rock that was with Israel in all their wanderings (*Psalms 78:35*). As God the Father is designated the "Rock," so also is God the Son. He was the Angel of the covenant, the Angel of the presence of God; He was the Angel of the Lord in all His relationships with Israel. God's name was in His Son (*Exodus 23:21*), and so Christ the Lord is called the Rock, just as is the eternal God. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul, in reviewing some of the experiences of God's ancient people, remarks, "And that Rock was Christ." (*1 Corinthians 10:4*.)*BSPC 144.2*

Note the following from the Testimonies:*BSPC 144.3*

"The apostles built upon a sure foundation, even the Rock of Ages."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 596.*BSPC 144.4*

"Christ, the true foundation, is a living stone."—*Mount of Blessing*, p. 216,*BSPC 144.5*

“Christ, the Word, the revelation of God, the manifestation of His character, His law, His love, His life, is the only foundation upon which we can build a character that will endure.”—*Ibid.* pp. 213, 214.*BSPC 144.6*

But we read also that the apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church:*BSPC 144.7*

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” *Ephesians 2:20.BSPC 144.8*

This, of course, can hardly mean that the apostles and prophets constituted the foundation of the church. They could, however, and did lay the foundation. Paul makes reference to this in his letter to the church at Corinth in the following words:*BSPC 144.9*

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation.” *1 Corinthians 3:10.BSPC 145.1*

A sacred responsibility was entrusted to the apostles of Christ. God certainly made a wonderful revelation to them. He revealed to them His eternal purpose, for the apostle Paul mentions concerning the gospel he preached:*BSPC 145.2*

“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” *Ephesians 3:5.BSPC 145.3*

Their work was of such an enduring character that it will be remembered throughout eternity. Their names actually appear in the foundations of the New Jerusalem. In describing it the apostle John mentions:*BSPC 145.4*

“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” *Revelation 21:14.BSPC 145.5*

The writings of the Spirit of prophecy also comment on this as follows:*BSPC 145.6*

“Upon the foundation that Christ Himself had laid, the apostles built the church of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 595.BSPC 145.7

“The apostles built upon a sure foundation, even the Rock of Ages. To this foundation they brought the stones they quarried from the world.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 596.BSPC 145.8

Some undoubtedly will raise a question about the words that Jesus addressed to Peter. The words as we find them in our Bible are: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” *Matthew 16:18*.BSPC 145.9

Some have maintained that inasmuch as the name Peter means “rock,” then Peter must be the rock upon which the church is built. This, however, would present rather poor prospects for the Christian church. In the Old Testament church, Jehovah, the infallible God, was the foundation; now, in the New Testament church a poor fallible man is to be the foundation. One could hardly conceive that our God would ordain such a plan. If the infinite and mighty God was the Rock of Israel, and Peter is the rock of Christendom, then the gospel period has surely sunk unspeakably and miserably below the period that preceded it. No, such a thing could never be. This gospel age is glorious; now we are in the full blaze of the revelation of God’s purpose. Things that in other ages were not made known to man, are now revealed in the full light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God.BSPC 145.10

How, then, are we to understand the words of Jesus? What does He mean when He addresses Peter and says, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Is it on “Peter” that the church is built? Is he the rock? It is true his name means “stone,” but in the Greek language it is a different word from what Jesus used when He said, “Upon this rock.” This will be apparent when the wording of the text is given, and the Greek words for Peter and rock are introduced. Notice the following: “And I [Jesus] say also unto thee, that thou art Peter [petros], and upon this rock [petra] I will build my church.”BSPC 146.1

Here are two Greek words: petros meaning “a stone,” this word being in the masculine gender; and petra, meaning the “solid rock,” this word being in the feminine gender. In other words, we have a

small stone and a mighty Gibraltar.*BSPC 146.2*

A number of the early fathers of the Christian church, including St. John Chrysostom (AD. 345-407), who was archbishop of Constantinople for many years, maintained in their commentaries on this particular text, that it was Christ and not Peter who was the rock (petra) on which Christ built His church. Furthermore, they maintain that Simon was named petros (a small stone) because of his faith in Christ as the Son of the living God.*BSPC 146.3*

Barnes, in his commentary, calls attention to another thing, and that is the form of Christ's words to Peter when He said, "Thou art Peter." Note his comments:*BSPC 146.4*

"Thou, in saying that I am the Son of God, has called me by a name expressive of my true character. I, also, have given to thee a name expressive of your character. I have called you Peter, a rock, denoting firmness, solidity, stability, and your confession has shown that the name is appropriate."—On *Matthew 16:18*.*BSPC 146.5*

The use of the word "this" in reference to the Rock "this Rock" is significant, and is one of the places in the New Testament where it stands for the speaker. There are two other instances worthy of note, and both of them are used in connection with our relation to our Lord and Master. When Jesus said, "This is that bread which came down from heaven" (*John 6:58*); and when He said, "Destroy this temple" (*John 2:19*), He was certainly making reference to Himself. In the expression in *Matthew 16*, when He said, "Upon this rock," He made reference to Himself. As to the attitude of the early church fathers to this expression, note the following excerpt:*BSPC 146.6*

"Launoi, the eminent Gallican, found but seventeen of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church (among whom he reckons 'Fathers' down to the twelfth century) who understand St. Peter to be 'the rock,' and he cites forty of the contrary opinion. Yet of the 'seventeen,' most of them speak only rhetorically, and with justifiable freedom. I have often done the same myself, on the principle which the same apostle applies to all Christians: 'You also as lively stones,' etc. But it is quite noteworthy that the Council of Trent itself momentarily adopts the prevailing patristic and therefore

the Catholic interpretation, speaking of the Nicene Creed.... Thus, the faith of Peter is confessed the only foundation, in a direct exposition of the text so often quoted with another intent. In spite of all this, the Creed of Pius IV was enjoined as soon as that council closed; and every member of the late Vatican Council was made to profess the same verbally before any other business was undertaken. Now, even this spurious creed forced them to swear concerning the Holy Scriptures, 'I will never take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.' Obviously, according to this rule, there is no Catholic doctrine on the subject; much less any Catholic teaching to the effect that the modern bishops of Rome are 'the rock,' as really as St. Peter himself."—Editorial "Elucidations," No. 7, on The Treatises of Cyprian. In The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, p. 561.*BSPC 147.1*

Furthermore, a significant fact is that this idea that the rock refers to Peter's confession is actually found in one of the prayers in the Roman Missal. It appears in Latin in Missale Romanum, published in Rome, 1898; but in a translation as given by C. S. Isaacson in his book entitled Our Brief against Rome, the following is observed:*BSPC 147.2*

"Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that thou would not suffer us, whom thou has established on the rock of the apostolic confession, to be shaken by any disturbances."—page 21.*BSPC 147.3*

If Jesus had meant us to understand that He was building His church on Peter, He could have said, "Thou art Petros, and upon this petros I will build My church." That at least would have been consistent, and no one could have misunderstood it. But He did not say that; neither did He say, "Thou art Peter, and upon thee will I build My church." But He said what He meant to say, and His words were quite natural. Peter had said concerning Him, "Thou art the Christ"; now Christ says to Peter, "Thou art Peter." Peter had made a unique and remarkable confession, that Christ was the Son of the living God. That was the truth, and He is the rock of our salvation, the rock upon which the church is founded. Mrs. E. G. White in her writings has given some helpful paragraphs concerning this.*BSPC 147.4*

“Jesus continued: ‘I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ The word Peter signifies a stone,—a rolling stone. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded.”—*The Desire of Ages*, 412, 413.BSPC 148.1

“God has never given a hint in His word that He has appointed any man to be the head of the church.”—*The Great Controversy*, 51.BSPC 148.2

“Human power and human might did not establish the church of God, and neither can they destroy it. Not on the rock of human strength, but on Christ Jesus, the Rock of Ages, was the church founded, ‘and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’”—*Prophets and Kings*, 595, 596.BSPC 148.3

The Symbols

In order more fully to impress the hearts of His people, God has given many symbols, or figures, to set forth the work of the church. They set forth also the relation the church sustains to Him, the living Head, and they illustrate also the relationship He sustains to the members of His body. Some of these symbols are being listed as follows:*BSPC 148.4*

1. The Church as an Army (Illustrative of Aggressive Warfare)

Every believer in Jesus, every member of the church of God, is a soldier of Christ. It is God's purpose that he be a "good soldier." (2 *Timothy* 2:3, 4.) Paul refers to Epaphroditus and Archippus as fellow soldiers in the conflict with the evil one. (*Philippians* 2:25; *Philemon* 2.) Christ our blessed Lord is the "captain" (*Hebrews* 2:10); He is the "leader and commander to the people" (*Isaiah* 55:4). Every soldier of the cross enlists under the command of our mighty General, and he is provided with full equipment for both defense and offense in the warfare against unrighteousness. Heaven's provision is the "whole armor of God," and this is complete equipment for the contest.*BSPC 148.5*

The accoutrements of the Roman soldier consisted of the following: the girdle or belt, the breastplate, the helmet, the shield, the sword, the shoes, including the leather shields for the legs, and the lance or spear. In the listing he gives in *Ephesians* 6 Paul mentions all these items of equipment except that of the spear. Here were items for the comfort and convenience of the warrior, such as shoes, leggings, the breastplate, and the girdle; there were parts of the equipment for defense, such as the helmet and the shield; there were also two important weapons for aggressive action, the sword and the spear. In Paul's mention of the soldier's armor he compares the various items to gospel truths, such as salvation, truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and the word of God. He refers also to prayer, urging the Christian soldier to pray always, "with all perseverance." Might this be an indication of the use of the spear or the lance? The sword was for hand-to-hand conflict; the spear, which was thrown, for long-range service. Might this not indicate that while he was engaged with the enemy at close quarters, using

the sword of the Spirit, he at the same time threw out the spear of importunate prayer in his earnest plea for divine help and victory? Yes, the “armor of God” is complete. It is the “armor of light” (*Romans 13:12*); it is the “armor of righteousness” (*2 Corinthians 6:7*).BSPC 149.1

“The church of Christ may be fitly compared to an army. The life of every soldier is one of toil, hardship, and danger. On every hand are vigilant foes, led on by the prince of the powers of darkness, who never slumbers and never deserts his post....BSPC 149.2

“All who enter the army are not to be generals, captains, sergeants, or even corporals. All have not the care and responsibility of leaders. There is hard work of other kinds to be done. Some must dig trenches and build fortifications; some are to stand as sentinels, some to carry messages. While there are but few officers, it requires many soldiers to form the rank and file of the army; yet its success depends upon the fidelity of every soldier.”—*Testimonies for the Church* 5:394, 395.BSPC 149.3

Christ, our mighty Captain, is the one who leads in this conflict, and He is a leader who never fails. The ultimate will be that the church will overcome “by the blood of the Lamb.” (*Revelation 12:11*.) Our Leader is invincible. He is the “captain of the Lord’s host.” (*Joshua 5:15*.) The marginal reading of *verse 14* gives the word “prince,” and this is the same word used in the book of Daniel where reference is made to “Michael your prince.” (*Daniel 10:21*.) Here, then, is Michael, the Archangel (*Jude 9*), with a drawn sword in His hands, leading the hosts of God forward to triumphant victory.BSPC 149.4

2. The Church as a Flock (Illustrative of Implicit Obedience)

This is one of the most beautiful symbols by which the church of Christ is known. The Lord speaks of His people as a flock, and encourages them with the words: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” *Luke 12:32*.BSPC 150.1

The shepherds are “to feed the flock of God” (*1 Peter 5:2*); they are

“to feed the church of God” (*Acts 20:28*). Jesus says they are to “feed my sheep” (*John 21:16*); and also to “feed my lambs” (*verse 15*). All are to be provided for. The food is not to be placed so high in the rack that the lambs of the flock cannot reach it. All true shepherds will be “ensamples to the flock” (*1 Peter 5:3*); and day by day will be on the alert, so that they may adequately and proficiently “take heed ... to all the flock” of God (*Acts 20:28*). *BSPC 150.2*

“Christ, the great example for all ministers, likens Himself to a shepherd. ‘I am the good shepherd,’ He declares; ‘the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.’ ‘I am the good shepherd, and know MY sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.’ As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. ‘Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord God.’”—*Gospel Workers, 181. BSPC 150.3*

Our Savior and Lord, thank God, is the good shepherd. The psalmist centuries ago declared in that much-beloved song of praise, “The Lord is’ my shepherd; I shall not want.” *Psalms 23:1*. This is a wonderful truth. The Lord is not merely our shepherd; He is my shepherd. Not long ago in one of our church schools the teacher asked one of the little boys to recite the first verse of this psalm. He had evidently heard it many times, but his simple recitation expressed a remarkable truth. He said, “The Lord is my shepherd; that’s all I want.” Yes, Christ is a faithful shepherd; He not only cares for the sheep but loves the sheep. *BSPC 150.4*

Jesus, our blessed Lord, is not only the “good shepherd” (*John 10:11*) but also the “chief Shepherd” (*1 Peter 5:4*). He is also that “great shepherd of the sheep” (*Hebrews 13:20*), and still further, the “Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (*1 Peter 2:25*). The word “shepherd” has a deep meaning for all ministers and church elders, for after all, they are the under shepherds. The Greek word rendered “shepherd” is also rendered “pastor” in both the Old and the New Testament. In *Jeremiah 3:15* the Lord promises, “I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” This is the same word rendered “shepherd” in other places. The same thing is true in the New

Testament, for when we read in *Ephesians 4:11* of “pastors and teachers,” we may know that the word “pastors” is the same word that is rendered “shepherd” when reference is made to Jesus as the good shepherd. What a privilege to be a minister or an elder of the church of God, and yet what a solemn responsibility! How we need to keep close to the “chief Shepherd,” to learn of Him, and ever seek to be faithful shepherds of God’s church.*BSPC 150.5*

3. The Church as a Temple (Illustrative of Perfect Organization)

This figure of the church brings us several important lessons concerning our church relationships. It is referred to by Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus:*BSPC 151.1*

“In whom all the building fitly framed together grown unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” *Ephesians 2:21, 22.BSPC 151.2*

All the members of the church are “lively stones” (*1 Peter 2:5*), “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (*Ephesians 2:20*). This cornerstone was foreshadowed by Isaiah in the days of Israel when he mentioned:*BSPC 151.3*

“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste!” *Isaiah 28:16.BSPC 151.4*

This is applied to Christ the Lord by the apostle Peter (*1 Peter 2:6*), and it is evident from the use he makes of this scripture that he knew who was the rock on which the church was built. Peter never thought of himself in this connection; he knew it was Christ his Lord.*BSPC 151.5*

Many lessons concerning the organization of the church and the perfecting of Christian character are seen in the hewing and the shaping of the stones, in the process of polishing, and in all the work necessary for preparing them for their place in the temple of God.*BSPC 151.6*

“His church is to be a temple built after the divine similitude, and the

angelic architect has brought his golden measuring rod from heaven, that every stone may be hewed and squared by the divine measurement, and polished to shine as an emblem of heaven, radiating in all directions the bright, clear beams of the Sun of Righteousness.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 17.BSPC 152.1

4. The Church as a Fine (Illustrative of Intimate Fellowship)

This is another familiar figure, and very well known, not only to the members of the early church, but also to the Israelites of ancient days. In the days of Isaiah, Jehovah declared:*BSPC 152.2*

“The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.” *Isaiah 5:7.BSPC 152.3*

Jeremiah also records the Lord as saying to His people, “Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed.” *Jeremiah 2:21*. From Ezekiel also came the word:*BSPC 152.4*

“It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.” *Ezekiel 17:8.BSPC 152.5*

Then after all the years of tender care and faithful husbandry, the Lord laments through Hosea:*BSPC 152.6*

“Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself.” *Hosea 10:1.BSPC 152.7*

When the Savior was here among men He gave to His people one of the most comforting and helpful, lessons of this intimate fellowship He sustains with them:*BSPC 152.8*

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” *John 15:1BSPC 152.9*

“I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.” *Verse 5.BSPC 152.10*

“Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples.” *Verse 8.BSPC 152.11*

How we all need to learn the lesson of abiding in Christ. It is not trying to be good; it is not our efforts to do the will of God. What is called for is abiding in Him. This means a restful, quiet yielding to His will, a willingness to let Him mold and fashion us according to the divine pattern. Christ Jesus is the vine stock; we are the branches. May we learn restfully to abide in Him. But such an experience will not be all resting; it will mean also vigilance and earnest labor for God. We must learn to be active in His service and yet be restful in spirit. We need to learn how to “rest in the Lord” and how to work for God at the same time. He desires that we grow in usefulness in His work. He wishes us to bear fruit, to “bring forth more fruit” (*verse 2*), to grow in experience that we bring “forth much fruit” (*verse 5*), and also that our fruit might remain (*verse 16*).*BSPC 152.12*

“It was when Christ was about to take leave of His disciples that He gave them the beautiful emblem of His relation to believers. He had been presenting before them the close union with Himself by which they could maintain spiritual life when His visible presence was withdrawn. To impress it upon their minds He gave them the vine as its most striking and appropriate symbol.”—*Testimonies for the Church 5:229, 230.BSPC 153.1*

Today the Lord is looking for much fruit from the branches of the vine. May we not disappoint Him, but may we so labor that by and by we may hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”*BSPC 153.2*

5. The Church Is His Body (Illustrative of Sympathetic Union)

This figure appears many times, and it is one of the most freely used New Testament symbols. We read:*BSPC 153.3*

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” *Romans 12:4, 5*. This body of Christ is His church, and of this Christ our Lord is the

head.*BSPC 153.4*

“And he is the head of the body, the church.” *Colossians 1:18.BSPC 153.5*

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.” *Ephesians 1:22, 23.BSPC 153.6*

The tender, affectionate relationship that should exist among all the members of the church is beautifully illustrated by the relation that each part of the human body sustains to the whole.*BSPC 153.7*

“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now bath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it bath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” *1 Corinthians 12:14-22.BSPC 153.8*

“By a comparison of the church with the human body, the apostle aptly illustrated the close and harmonious relationship that should exist among all members of the church of Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 317.BSPC 154.1*

There are several other symbols used to illustrate various aspects of the relationship of Christ to His people, and the following might be studied with profit:*BSPC 154.2*

A garden	<i>1 Corinthians 3:8, 9</i>	<i>The Acts of the Apostles, 275</i>
A fortress	<i>Psalms 48:1, 12</i>	<i>The Acts of the Apostles, 11</i>
A vineyard	<i>Luke 20:9-18</i>	<i>Christ’s Object Lessons, 296, 297</i>

A woman	<i>2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 3:14</i>	<i>The Great Controversy, 381</i>
A city on a hill	<i>Matthew 5:14</i>	<i>The Acts of the Apostles, 12</i>
A candlestick	<i>Revelation 1:20</i>	<i>The Acts of the Apostles, 585</i>
A fountain of life	<i>Ezekiel 47:8-12</i>	<i>The Acts of the Apostles, 13</i>

Unity

One of the most desirable conditions, and one that we all like to see in the church of God, is a spirit of unity among the believers. Generally speaking, this is a rare commodity on the spiritual market. It may be that the reason we see so little unity in church life is that there is so little unity in the family life of the children of God. One of the tragedies of our time is the wrecked homes we see on every hand. There is a lack of willingness to bear and forbear within the family. To have a greater degree of unity in God's church, however, will call for a greater degree of unity and love in each Christian family.*BSPC 154.3*

This is one of the vital needs to an effective witness by the church. If unity exists, it is a powerful recommendation for Christ and His claims to the world. Jesus Himself reminds us, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." *John 13:35.BSPC 154.4*

Mrs. E. G. White has well remarked:*BSPC 155.1*

"It is the will of God that union and brotherly love should exist among His people. The prayer of Christ just before His crucifixion was that His disciples might be one as He is one with the Father, that the world might believe that God had sent Him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.' While we are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, it should be our constant aim to reach this state of unity. This is the evidence of our discipleship."—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 520.BSPC 155.2*

The word "unity" appears but three times in the entire Bible. There is one reference in the Old Testament and two in the New. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian church, calls attention to "the unity of the faith" and "the unity of the Spirit." (*Ephesians 4:13, 3.*) One of these references pertains to doctrine; the other to relationship. The sweet singer of Israel was certainly impressed with the idea of love among the brethren, for he mentions, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" *Psalms 133:1.BSPC*

On the question of doctrine, it is important that the church be united in its teaching. In such matters we need, as the gospel prophet of the Old Testament counsels, to “see eye to eye” (*Isaiah 52:8*), and as the apostle to the Gentiles reminds us, to “all speak the same thing” (*1 Corinthians 1:10*). *BSPC 155.4*

The prayer of Jesus for His church indicates His own deep longing for an abiding fellowship among His people. No less than five times in His prayer in *John 17* do we find an expression like this: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” *Verse 21*. He showed also how this inestimable relationship might be brought about when He prayed, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” *Verse 23*. It is a good thing at all times for the church to move together, to move as a united whole. This will mean much for their influence, not only upon themselves, but upon those who are ever ready to find fault with God’s people. Jesus told us what this would mean to the world. *BSPC 155.5*

“That the world may believe that thou has sent me.” *Verse 21. BSPC 156.1*

“That the world may know that thou has sent me, and has loved them.” *Verse 23. BSPC 156.2*

Unity, however, does not mean that everybody must be cast in or pressed into the same mold. There will be opportunity for each individual to work in his own way and yet maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is such a thing as unity in diversity. *BSPC 156.3*

“God has different ways of working, and He has different workmen to whom He entrusts varied gifts. One worker may be a ready speaker; another a ready writer; another may have the gift of sincere, earnest, fervent prayer; another the gift of singing; another may have special power to explain the word of God with clearness. And each gift is to become a power for God, because He works with the laborer. To one God gives the word of wisdom, to another knowledge, to another faith; but all are to work under the same

Head. The diversity of gifts leads to a diversity of operations; but ‘it is the same God which works all in all.’—*Gospel Workers*, 483.BSPC 156.4

Such a situation can be brought about, however, only by each member’s remembering that he is part of the general body. He cannot move independently; he must move in concert with others. At times this will call for giving up something; it will mean the surrender of one’s own judgment to the judgment of the church. God’s counsel on this is plain, for He says:BSPC 156.5

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.”
Hebrews 13:17.BSPC 156.6

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”
Ephesians 5:21.BSPC 156.7

“All of you be subject one to another.” *1 Peter 5:5.BSPC 156.8*

Vital counsel has been given to the remnant church on this question.BSPC 156.9

“Church relationship is not to be lightly canceled; yet when the path of some professed followers of Christ is crossed, or when their voice has not the controlling influence which they think it deserves, they will threaten to leave the church. True, in leaving the church they would themselves be the greatest sufferers; for in withdrawing beyond the pale of its influence, they subject themselves to the full temptations of the world.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:17, 18.BSPC 156.10*

Chapter 11—Organization in the Church of Christ

Order is a divine law. Just as there can be no living, active human body unless its members are organically united and functioning together under central control, so there can be no living, growing, prospering church unless all the members perform their God-given duties and functions under the direction of a divinely constituted authority.*BSPC 156.11*

For the sake of healthy development and for the accomplishment of her glorious task of carrying the gospel of salvation to all the world, Christ gave to His church a simple but effective system of organization. Success in her endeavors to achieve her mission depends on loyal adherence to this divine pattern.*BSPC 156.12*

It is a good thing at times that we give study to the way God has led His people. There is a great danger of forgetting the many providences of God, and the many evidences of divine leadership in connection with His cause. A number of years ago we were told by the messenger of the Lord:*BSPC 156.13*

“In reviewing Our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 31.BSPC 156.14*

The Principle of Order

Order and organization characterize the work of God, whether in the universe, among the angelic hosts, or in the church of God. The writings of the Spirit of prophecy give emphasis to this:*BSPC 157.1*

“There is perfect order in heaven, perfect concord and agreement.”*Testimonies for the Church 4:199.BSPC 157.2*

“God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic hosts. Success can only attend order and harmonious action.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 376.BSPC 158.1*

The order and organization seen so manifestly in the universe at large and among the hosts of angel beings are to characterize God’s work in this old world of sin.*BSPC 158.2*

“System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God’s people on the earth.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 26.BSPC 158.3*

Order in the Days of Israel

There are numerous instances of proper order and organization in the ranks of Israel in the days of old. This can be seen:*BSPC 158.4*

1. In the Encampment in the Wilderness

The detailed story of the arrangement of the various tribes around the sacred tabernacle is found in the early chapters of the book of Numbers. God's holy sanctuary was placed in the center of this encampment, with the priests and the Levites in their tents immediately surrounding it, and the various tribes in order beyond. The messenger of the Lord, in commenting on this arrangement, remarks as follows:*BSPC 158.5*

"The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were 'captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens'; and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties."*BSPC 158.6*

"The Hebrew camp was arranged in exact order. It was separated into three divisions, each having its appointed position in the encampment. In the center was the tabernacle, the abiding place of the invisible King. Around it were stationed the priests and Levites. Beyond these were encamped all the other tribes."—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 374, 375.BSPC 158.7*

2. In the Plan for the Leadership of the People

The arrangement for the formation of smaller but subsidiary

organizations, each with its leader, met with God's approval, and proved to be a great blessing to the children of God in those early days. Mrs. E. G. White comments:*BSPC 159.1*

"He [Jethro] counseled Moses to appoint proper persons as rulers of thousands, and others as rulers of hundreds, and others of tens.... These were to judge in all matters of minor consequence, while the most difficult and important cases should still be brought before Moses, who was to be to the people, said Jethro, 'God-ward, that thou may bring the causes unto God. And thou shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.' This counsel was accepted, and it not only brought relief to Moses, but resulted in establishing more perfect order among the people."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 301.*BSPC 159.2*

3. In the Days of the Early Church

The thought of order is well illustrated in the counsel the apostle Paul gave to the church at Corinth. We read:*BSPC 159.3*

"Let all things be done decently and in order." *1 Corinthians 14:40.BSPC 159.4*

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." *Verse 33.BSPC 159.5*

"The rest will I set in order when I come." *1 Corinthians 11:34.BSPC 159.6*

"And so ordain I in all churches." *1 Corinthians 7:17.BSPC 159.7*

In *verse 33* it is interesting to note the significance of the word "confusion." In the margin of this text we read "tumult, or, unquietness." The Greek word here rendered "confusion" is rendered by the word "commotion" in *Luke 21:9*, and "tumults" in *2 Corinthians 12:20*. The word "tumults" appears also in *2 Corinthians 6:5*, and the marginal rendering there is "tossing to and fro." What a picture! When there is confusion in a church, when tumults arise, when dissension and rivalries are rife, we certainly have a disorderly church. May the church of God today ever be saved from

such disgraceful and God-dishonoring conduct.*BSPC 159.8*

Wherever the apostle Paul labored he encouraged harmonious and cooperative service. In his letter to the Thessalonian church he reminds them:*BSPC 159.9*

“We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.”*BSPC 159.10*

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” 2 *Thessalonians 3:11, 6.BSPC 159.11*

Subsidiary yet Related Organizations

It is but natural in the development of any organization, whether governmental, business, or religious, that as the work makes progress and becomes enlarged in its scope, there should be not only a distribution of responsibilities but the forming of subsidiary yet related organizations. This is what took place in the work in Israel in the days of Moses. The cause of God grew rapidly, and Moses was encumbered with many cares. His father-in-law, Jethro, when on a visit to him on one occasion, after beholding the range of Moses' activities, counseled him to share his burdens with others and also to form smaller organizations that could be responsible to the main governing body. This counsel is recorded in *Exodus 18:21*. There the plan is clearly outlined. There were to be organizations known as tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands. Each of these had a leader. This meant, of course, many leaders in the organization of a thousand. In the first place, there was a ruler over that organization, but there were ten organizations of one hundred in that thousand, each with its own ruler. That meant eleven. In addition there were fifties, of which there were twenty in each organization of a thousand, and each of these had its leader. Still further, there were the tens, each with its leader. Of these there were one hundred in the organization of the thousand. Hence we have in that organization no less than 131 leaders, each in charge of an organization, the tens responsible to the fifties, the fifties responsible to the hundreds, and the hundreds responsible to the thousands.*BSPC 160.1*

The same principle obtained in the organization of the early church, in both the development of organizations and the formation of departments for carrying forward the rapidly expanding work.*BSPC 160.2*

We have already seen that there were local churches, and that these individual churches were grouped into organizations known as the churches of Achaia, and "the churches of Galatia," et cetera. This development meant the formation of organizations of churches, doubtless following the provincial lines or boundaries of the Roman Empire. Just what the names of these organizations were we do not know, except as we have terms used in the

Scripture similar to those just mentioned, such as “the churches of Asia,” “the churches of God which are in Judea,” et cetera. In addition to the provinces, some of the island fields were evidently formed into similar organizations, for we read of the churches in Crete with Titus in general charge. (*Titus 1:5.*)*BSPC 160.3*

This principle of uniting individuals into the membership of the local church and then uniting churches to form a group of churches is in accordance with God’s divine plan.*BSPC 161.1*

“Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 91, 92.**BSPC 161.2*

“The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian, and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to co-operate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 164.**BSPC 161.3*

Another development that became necessary was the formation of certain departments, with leaders giving special attention to specific branches of the work. It was not long before the leaders in apostolic days became overburdened with the large and growing work, and in order not to be hindered in their primary task of preaching the gospel, they formed departments for carrying forward certain phases of the work. There arose a situation in which the Grecian widows were in dire need. A department was formed to meet that and similar needs.*BSPC 161.4*

Then the message broke beyond the bounds of Jewry. Openings came among the Gentiles, and urgent calls were heard on every hand. This led the brethren to put a leader in charge of the work for the Jews and another in charge of the work for the Gentiles. To use modern terminology, we might call these organizations the Department of Home Missions and the Department of Foreign, or

Overseas, Missions. We read of this in Paul's letter to the church at Galatia, where he mentions that "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." *Galatians 2:7*. Our own work in the Advent cause has followed similar lines. We read:*BSPC 161.5*

"The church was continually enlarging, and this growth in membership brought increasingly heavy burdens upon those in charge. No one man, or even one set of men, could continue to bear these burdens alone, without imperiling the future prosperity of the church. There was necessity for a further distribution of the responsibilities which had been borne so faithfully by a few during the earlier days of the church. The apostles must now take an important step in the perfecting of gospel order in the church, by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves."—*The Acts of the Apostles, 88, 89.BSPC 162.1*

"As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 26.BSPC 162.2*

We began with a few individual churches. As the churches increased, however, it became necessary to form conferences of churches. As the work still further developed, even conferences were organized into unions of conferences; a still further step became necessary as the work took on worldwide proportions, and that was the formation of divisions of the General Conference, which incorporated the unions into divisional organization.*BSPC 162.3*

It seems significant, but certainly with no plan that it should be so, that the arrangement in Israel, which followed the counsel of Jethro, seems duplicated in our own work. Israel had the tens, we have the churches; they had the fifties, we have the conferences; they had

the hundreds, we have the unions; they had the thousands, which made up the general organization of Israel, we have the divisions, which together constitute the General Conference. The conferences and unions are regularly organized conferences, each with its own delegated constituency; the divisions, however, are not conferences; they are divisions of the General Conference; in other words, a division operating in any given area is the General Conference operating in that area.*BSPC 162.4*

The Business of the Church

There is naturally a business aspect to any organization, whether governmental, commercial, civic, or religious. There must be direction; there must be the keeping of accounts. All this calls for the leadership of those who have gifts along administrative and business lines.*BSPC 162.5*

One of the important things in church life is the selection of leaders for various positions of responsibility, whether in the local church, in the conference, or in the institution. When leaders with the essential qualifications, not only of leadership, but particularly of spiritual character, are chosen, it will mean much to the organization; it will mean all the difference between success and failure.*BSPC 163.1*

Choice of Leaders

God's plan through the centuries is that both leaders and people join in the choosing of those who are to bear responsibilities in His cause. This was so in the days of Israel. It is true that Moses was called directly by Jehovah, but when the time came for others to share the responsibilities of leadership, God instructed Moses as to the course to be followed. Jethro, recognizing the heavy burdens Moses was carrying, counseled him to appoint men to join with him in the work of directing the various activities of Israel. Moses evidently took this counsel to the Lord, and it is certain that the Lord approved of Jethro's suggestion. Growing out of this, Moses went forward with the work and selected men for various positions of trust.*BSPC 163.2*

In the record of *Exodus 18:19-25* one would gather that Moses himself did the choosing and also the appointing of these men. The text reads, "And Moses chose able men out of all Israel." *Verse 25*. The record in Deuteronomy adds something that is not indicated in Exodus. The story in Deuteronomy reads:*BSPC 163.3*

"And I spoke unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: the Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as you are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!) How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And you answered me, and said, The thing which thou has spoken is good for us to do." *Deuteronomy 1:9-14.BSPC 163.4*

Here is the divine principle at work. Moses told the people, "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." Some of the English translations give the wording thus:*BSPC 163.5*

"Choose capable men, intelligent and experienced, from each of your clans, and let me put them in charge of you." Moffatt.*BSPC 164.1*

“Choose for yourselves skilful, clearheaded, and educated men to control you, and I will appoint them your chiefs.” Fenton.*BSPC 164.2*

It is evident from this that the people did the choosing and Moses did the appointing.*BSPC 164.3*

The same thing obtained in the days of the early church. When seven men were to be chosen to share in the responsibilities with the apostles at the time economic difficulties arose, placing the Grecian widows in a situation of real need, the apostles followed the same procedure. They said to the members of the church, “Look you out among you” (*Acts 6:3*); then we read, “And they [the people] chose” (*verse 5*). The men who were the choice of the church were then set before the apostles; they were ordained (*verse 6*) and were then appointed by the apostles for their specific task (*verse 3*).*BSPC 164.4*

The Syriac translation is interesting in this connection, for it reads, “Search out, and elect from among you, seven men.. that we may place them over this business.”*BSPC 164.5*

One might go still further, and see the principle in operation in other experiences in the apostolic church. Take for instance the choosing and ordaining of elders in the local churches. We read in several places that the apostles engaged in this necessary service. (*Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.*) But how was this done? Who made the choice? Did the apostles do this without counsel with the local churches? The record in *Acts 14:23* indicates they took such counsel. The text reads:*BSPC 164.6*

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”*BSPC 164.7*

The actual wording in this text mentions that the apostles ordained the elders but does not indicate how they were chosen. There is one word in this text, however, that is full of meaning in this respect; that is the word “ordained.” This is not the usual Greek word used for the act of ordaining. This word means not so much the actual service of ordination as the manner in which individuals were

chosen for ordination. The Greek word here is cheirotoneo. It is really a combination of two words, cheir, meaning “hand,” and the verb teino, meaning “to stretch.” The word cheir enters into our word chiropody. Here the use of cheir as meaning “hand” will readily be recognized, for a chiropodist is one who manipulates the hands and the feet. Hence this Greek word cheirotoneo means “to stretch forth the hand.” This is so rendered in some of the English translations, as for instance:*BSPC 164.8*

“Moreover appointing unto them by vote in each assembly [elders].” Rotherham.*BSPC 165.1*

“They also chose elders for them in each church, with the lifting of the hands.” Verkuyl.*BSPC 165.2*

“And in every Church, after prayer and fasting, they selected Elders by show of hands.” Weymouth.*BSPC 165.3*

In a footnote Weymouth gives the following: “The verb itself (lit. ‘hand-stretched’) implies this.... And so in the Teaching of the Apostles, ch. 15, ‘elect therefore by show of hands bishops and deacons for yourselves, men worthy of the Lord.’”*BSPC 165.4*

The same word is used in one other place in the New Testament and that is in *2 Corinthians 8:19*, where we read, “Who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us.”*BSPC 165.5*

The expression “chosen” of the churches is the same word cheirotoneo. Here we have a fuller meaning of the word given in this text. The Cambridge Bible has a good note on this verse:*BSPC 165.6*

“The word here used signifies chosen by show of hands. So also in *Acts 14:23*. Voting by show of hands was the custom among the Greeks as among ourselves.”*BSPC 165.7*

Hence one is able to gather what the apostles did when they went to the churches to see that adequate leadership was provided for the various groups of believers. They would counsel with them, and the church members would indicate their desires. When the decision was made they voted by the uplifted hand. These men

selected by the church were then brought to the apostles, who in turn ordained them. In this way they were appointed for the important work of leadership in the church of Christ.*BSPC 165.8*

The writings of the Spirit of prophecy are clear in their counsel on this matter, as will be seen in the following excerpts:*BSPC 165.9*

“Someone should be selected by the voice of the church to be the acknowledged leader.”*Testimonies for the Church 5:619.BSPC 165.10*

“Tell it to the church, and let action be taken in the case according to the Scriptures!”—*Testimonies for the Church 5:617.BSPC 165.11*

The Matter of Delegation

As we have already seen, the work of God grew, and in time there were not only local churches but groups of churches. Just as individuals constitute the membership of the local church, so the individual churches constitute the membership of the local conference or group of churches. In the local church each member has a vote in all the proceedings of the church; in the group of churches or conferences every member of the church does not have a vote. In the business meetings of the local church he does, but in the sessions of the local conference, representation is by delegation from the churches, and it is the delegates who have the right and privilege of voting. By an agreed plan the churches choose a certain number of individuals to serve as delegates to the local conference session. In this way every church is represented, and each church, through its delegates, has a voice in the affairs of the larger or wider organization. This also has been well expressed in the Testimonies:*BSPC 166.1*

“Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference.”*Testimonies for the Church 8:236, 237.BSPC 166.2*

The principle of representation through delegation is well established in the Scriptures. The following references will show how God spoke to the whole congregation of Israel through their leaders or elders: *Exodus 3:15-18; 29-31; 12:21-28; 19:7, 8.BSPC 166.3*

In like manner the Lord spoke by Joshua (*Joshua 24:1, 2*), and by Samuel in later years (*1 Samuel 8:4*). We see the apostles in the early days of Christianity doing likewise. (*Acts 15:1, 4, 6; 20:17.*)*BSPC 166.4*

Concerning the matter of voting at the time of the general councils of the church, note the following from the Testimonies:*BSPC 166.5*

“The council which decided this case was composed of apostles and teachers who had been prominent in raising up the Jewish and Gentile Christian churches, with chosen delegates from various places. Elders from Jerusalem and deputies from Antioch were present, and the most influential churches were represented. The council moved in accordance with the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. As a result of their deliberations, they all saw that God Himself had answered the question at issue by bestowing upon the Gentiles the Holy Ghost; and they realized that it was their part to follow the guidance of the Spirit. The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The ‘apostles and elders,’ men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 196.BSPC 166.6*

The churches responded to the decision of this general council, which evidently brought great joy and satisfaction to the hearts of all the church members. (*Acts 15:30, 31.*)*BSPC 167.1*

“The broad and far-reaching decisions of the general council brought confidence into the ranks of the Gentile believers, and the cause of God prospered. In Antioch, the church was favored with the presence of Judas and Silas, the special messengers who had returned with the apostles from the meeting in Jerusalem. ‘Being prophets also themselves,’ Judas and Silas ‘exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.’”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 197.BSPC 167.2*

Working Together

If there is one thing more important than another in church life, it is that the members work together in carrying out their plans and policies. To find a way so that each can act a part, and do his share in the sphere for which he is best fitted, will make for harmonious and efficient service in all church relationships.*BSPC 167.3*

The apostle Paul sought very earnestly to impress this thought upon the members of the early church. Time and again in his letters we find expressions such as:*BSPC 167.4*

“We are laborers together with God.” *1 Corinthians 3:9.BSPC 167.5*

“We then, as workers together with him.” *2 Corinthians 6:1.BSPC 167.6*

“You also helping together by prayer for us.” *2 Corinthians 1:11.BSPC 167.7*

“With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” *Philippians 1:27.BSPC 167.8*

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love.” *Colossians 2:2.BSPC 167.9*

Paul evidently maintained this attitude of love and fellowship with his colleagues in service, for he refers to them as “my fellow workers” (*Colossians 4:11*). “my fellow laborers” (*Philippians 4:3*), “my fellow helpers” (*2 Corinthians 8:23*). “my work fellow” (*Romans 16:21*), “my fellow soldier” (*Philippians 2:25*). And “my yoke fellow” (*Philippians 4:3*).*BSPC 167.10*

Such a spirit of unity can be brought about only when both leaders and people manifest the utmost confidence in one another jealousy and prejudice must be put aside. There must be a willingness on the part of each person to take the place assigned to him and then labor, not as unto man, but as unto God. When the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of His people, there will be a spirit of confidence, there will be love and fellowship, and church members will feel a joy and spiritual satisfaction in their communion one with

another.*BSPC 167.11*

In his letters to the church at Corinth, and at Galatia, Paul expresses this very beautifully when he writes:*BSPC 168.1*

“Having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.” 2
Corinthians 2:1BSPC 168.2

“I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.” 2
Corinthians 7:16.BSPC 168.3

“I have confidence in you through the Lord.” *Galatians 5:10.BSPC 168.4*

How this must have cheered the hearts of the believers in those churches, to receive assurance from their beloved leader that he regarded them with such love and affection.*BSPC 168.5*

“The success of our work depends upon our love to God, and our love to our fellow men. When there is harmonious action among the individual members of the church, when there is love and confidence manifested by brother to brother, there will be proportionate force and power in our work for the salvation of men.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 188.BSPC 168.6*

Another important phase of church life is to cultivate the habit of speaking well of one another. How easy it is to see the faults and failings of others; how easy it is to make these things the subject of conversation. What a commendable thing it would be for our own experience if we would see and talk of the excellencies of our brethren and sisters! What a change this would make in our relationship together in the church of Christ. Paul learned how to do this, and he counsels the brethren to do likewise. In his letter to the church at Rome he wrote, “Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love.” *Romans 12:10*. This is the only place in the New Testament where the original word is used and translated “kindly affectionate.” But it conveys its own beautiful meaning. The thought is that of tenderness—be tenderly affectionate one toward the other.*BSPC 168.7*

Chapter 12—Leadership in the Church of Christ

Leadership is a vital necessity in the work of God as well as in any other organization governing the various aspects of life's activities. God, in His providence, made provision for this in the very early days of earth's history. Even in the pre-sanctuary period the father was priest in his family. We read also of Melchizedek, who was priest of the Most High God. When the children of Israel were in Egypt certain men were known as elders of the people (*Exodus 3:16*), and in the final arrangements for the Exodus Moses took careful continuous counsel with these elders. *BSPC 168.8*

The Principle of Leadership

In the apostolic days, apart from the twelve apostles and others who had been called to share in the responsibilities of leadership in the church, the Lord provided special gifts of the Spirit, which He bestowed upon certain of His children. Among those listed in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth are the following:*BSPC 169.1*

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” *1 Corinthians 12:28.BSPC 169.2*

This outline is clear and easy to be understood. One of the gifts in this listing, however, deserves special consideration in the light of our theme. This is the word “governments.” It so happens that this is the only place in the New Testament where the original word here rendered “governments” is used. There is another form of the word, however, which is translated, “master” and “ship master.” This naturally involves the idea of supervising, directing, et cetera. Various translations of the New Testament render the word “governments” as follows: “power to govern,” Twentieth Century “administrators,” Moffatt; “powers of organization,” Weymouth. The Greek word itself means “steering,” “piloting,” “directing.”*BSPC 169.3*

In harmony with this we see the apostle Paul directing the churches in their varied activities (*1 Corinthians 7:17; 16:1*); we see him also giving direction to his fellow workers (*1 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 6:21, 22*).*BSPC 170.1*

It appears that in both the Old and the New Testament the elders of the church felt the necessity of close collaboration and counsel in matters pertaining to the work of God, for we find them having councils from time to time. There was a meeting of the elders in the days of Samuel (*1 Samuel 8:4*); the same thing was true in the days of David, for we find him taking counsel with the leaders with reference to plans for God's work (*1 Chronicles 13:1*).*BSPC 170.2*

Even before this we learn that the Levites who served in the Temple were so organized that they had leaders over certain groups. But

there was also a leader known as the chief of all these leaders, for we read in *Numbers 3:32* of a certain man who was known as “chief over the chief of the Levites.”*BSPC 170.3*

Another passage in the book of Psalms refers to “the assembly of the elders” (*Psalms 107:32*). The French Bible renders this “in the council of the elders,” and the Companion Bible gives it as “in the session or seated assembly of the elders.”*BSPC 170.4*

In the organization of the early church it should be pointed out that the first step was taken by Jesus Himself, and that was when He ordained the twelve apostles. We read:*BSPC 170.5*

“It was at the ordination of the twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ’s departure was to carry on His work on the earth.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 18.**BSPC 170.6*

The organization of the apostolic church followed to some degree the plan of ancient Israel. In those days they had twelve patriarchs and the seventy elders of the people, in the New Testament days they had the twelve apostles and the seventy laymen called to service.*BSPC 170.7*

“As in the Old Testament, the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church.”—*The Desire of Ages, 291.**BSPC 170.8*

In the days of the apostles the church soon developed an organization that adequately cared for their various needs as they arose. There were the elders of local churches, also the directors of groups of churches. There were men in charge of the department of home missions and the department of overseas missions. This plan gave to the church strong leadership as long as the men called to these positions were men of consecration and devotion to God.*BSPC 170.9*

Names Given to Church Leaders

In the apostolic days there were several designated leaders of God's people. These were known as elders, deacons, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. (*Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Ephesians 4:11.*) There was another group who bore heavy administrative burdens who were known as bishops (*1 Timothy 3:2*), "overseers" (*Acts 20:28*), "pillars" (*Galatians 2:9*), and "chief men" (*Acts 15:22*). The term "bishop" had a somewhat different meaning in the early days of the church from what it has today. Then it meant supervisor; in fact, the word rendered "bishop" elsewhere is rendered "overseer" in *Acts 20:28*. Furthermore, we have another ecclesiastical term used in the book of Timothy. There Paul writes concerning the "presbytery." (*1 Timothy 4:14.*) This is the only place this word is used in the Scriptures. The Greek word means the whole body of elders, or the assembly of elders. It is this word in the Greek form of presbuteros that is rendered "elder" in our New Testament.*BSPC 171.1*

In connection with the office of elder it should be observed that this term was applied to two groups of men. There were those like the apostles who served the church at large, and there were those who served the local church that called them to service. The former were called to their office and ordained for their work by the entire church; the latter were called by the local church to serve in the sphere of the local church that elected them.*BSPC 171.2*

In addition to these elders there were other officers of the local church. There were deacons, and there were officers like the secretary and treasurer. We do not read of secretaries in the apostolic church, but there is no doubt that they were there. They were in the Old Testament church, as can be seen in such scriptures as *2 Samuel 8:17* and *2 Kings 18:18*. In these texts we find the word "scribe," with the marginal rendering as "secretary." The secretary in those ancient days was evidently the same in principle as today. He was a "recorder" (*2 Samuel 20:24*) or "remembrancer" or "writer of chronicles" (*2 Samuel 8:16*, margin).*BSPC 171.3*

The treasurers were certainly necessary in the church of God.

Instances of their activities are seen in *Nehemiah 13:13* and *1 Chronicles 9:26*.BSPC 171.4

The Requisites for Leadership

Men of Spiritual Power

The primary qualification of all who accept leadership in God's cause is that of spiritual character. The great apostle to the Gentiles certainly stressed this when he said:*BSPC 172.1*

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” *1 Corinthians 13:1.BSPC 172.2*

This thought was emphasized also to the Jews of old. Concerning the counsel Jethro gave to Moses in the appointment of leaders, we read the following in the Scriptures of truth:*BSPC 172.3*

“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.” *Exodus 18:21.BSPC 172.4*

The same principle was stressed concerning the choice of the seven who shared in responsibility with the apostles. The counsel given was:*BSPC 172.5*

“Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” *Acts 6:3.BSPC 172.6*

These scriptures should be prayerfully pondered by every leader in the church. Vital principles are expressed in these passages of Holy Writ.*BSPC 172.7*

Some of the translations throw meaning on certain words. For instance, in the afore-mentioned scripture, note the expression “of honest report.” In the translations, however, this is rendered “of good standing” by Williams, “of attested character” by Spencer (R.C.).*BSPC 172.8*

Then instead, of the phrase “full of ... wisdom” the Williams translation gives “of good practical sense.” These are essential qualities, and we need ever to remember that “in choosing men and

women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess worldly wealth, learning, or eloquence. He asks, ‘Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?’*BSPC 172.9*

“God can use every person just in proportion as He can put His Spirit into the soul-temple. The work that He will accept is the work that reflects His image. His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristic of His immortal principles!”—*The Ministry of Healing, 37.BSPC 172.10*

When we turn to the Old Testament record and observe the qualifications outlined in the book of Exodus, as given previously, mention might be made of one of the expressions that is used.*BSPC 173.1*

It is that of “hating covetousness.” In the Menge translation of the German Bible this reads, “men who cannot be bought or sold with bribes.” Another translation gives, “haters of unjust gain.”*BSPC 173.2*

The counsel given in the Testimonies quite forcefully expresses the great need of today in the following words:*BSPC 173.3*

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men,—men who will not be bought or sold; men who in their inmost souls are true and honest; men who do not fear to call sin by its right name; men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole; men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—*Education, 57.BSPC 173.4*

Men of Purpose and Conviction

God calls for leaders today who have courage (*Acts 15:25, 26*), who are men of conviction (*1 Chronicles 12:32*), and men who work with steady purpose (*2 Corinthians 8:10, 11*). Moffatt has an interesting and illuminating translation of these verses from 2 Corinthians:*BSPC 173.5*

“It is to your interest to go on with this enterprise, for you started it last year, you were the first not merely to do anything but to want to

do anything. Now, carry it through, so that your readiness to take it up may be equaled by the way you carry it through.”*BSPC 173.6*

It has been well said: “God, give us men! A time like this demands Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and willing hands; Men whom the lust of office cannot kill; Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy; Men who possess opinions and a will; Men who have honor; men who will not lie.” —Josiah Gilbert Holland*BSPC 173.7*

Other Requisites

God calls for men of practical ability for His service. Let us observe the following characteristics:*BSPC 173.8*

1. They Must Have the Gift of Leadership.*BSPC 174.1*

This is an indispensable quality for all who expect to succeed as leaders in God’s cause. They must know how to “rule,” and yet rule in love. (*Romans 12:8*.) They must know how to organize and lay plans; they must know how to work with others. Leaders must of necessity at times give commands (*2 Thessalonians 3:4, 6*), and they need to learn how to do this with sympathetic regard for those who labor under them. Leaders of God must be willing to take counsel. We read concerning David that he “consulted ... with every leader.” (*1 Chronicles 13:1*) The direction given to us by the Lord is clear on this point:*BSPC 174.2*

“We must move discreetly, sensibly, in harmony with the judgment of God-fearing counselors; for in this course alone lies our safety and strength.”*Testimonies for the Church 9:257.BSPC 174.3*

“Brethren, you will have to wrestle with difficulties, carry burdens, give advice, plan and execute, constantly looking to God for help. Pray and labor, labor and pray; as pupils in the school of Christ, learn of Jesus.... It is in the order of God that those who bear responsibilities should often meet together to counsel with one another, and to pray earnestly for that wisdom which He alone can impart.”—*Gospel Workers, 417.BSPC 174.4*

2. They Should Be Men of Good Judgment.*BSPC 174.5*

Men called to positions of responsibility need good, sound judgment. This counsel has been given to the children of God many times through the centuries. We read:*BSPC 174.6*

“Thou shall not wrest judgment; thou shall not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shall thou follow, that thou may live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God gives thee.” *Deuteronomy 16:19, 20.BSPC 174.7*

This counsel was renewed in the days of Jehoshaphat. (2 *Chronicles 19:6, 7, 9.BSPC 174.8*

The following pointed counsel comes to us through the writings of the gift of prophecy:*BSPC 174.9*

“It is of great importance that the one who is chosen to care for the spiritual interests of patients and helpers be a man of sound judgment and undeviating principle, a man who will have moral influence, who knows how to deal with minds. He should be a person of wisdom and culture, of affection as well as intelligence. He may not be thoroughly efficient in all respects at first; but he should, by earnest thought and the exercise of his abilities, qualify himself for this important work. The greatest wisdom and gentleness are needed to serve in this position acceptably yet with unbending integrity, for prejudice, bigotry, and error of every form and description must be met.”—*Testimonies for the Church 4:546, 547.BSPC 174.10*

3. They Should Speak Well of Others.*BSPC 175.1*

The leader should learn to speak well of his colleagues in service, and especially of those who preceded him in office. It is so easy for anyone to belittle the work of the person who occupied the position before him. The example of Paul is commendable. Note the way in which he referred to Apollos, who differed with him in one of his plans:*BSPC 175.2*

“As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto

you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time." *1 Corinthians 16:12.BSPC 175.3*

Moffatt's rendering of this verse indicates that Paul recognized the hand of the Lord in the delay, for we read:*BSPC 175.4*

"I urged him to accompany the other brothers on a visit to you; he will come as soon as he has time, but for the present it is not the will of God that he should visit you."*BSPC 175.5*

The Responsibilities of Leadership

A sacred and solemn responsibility rests upon every man who is called by the Lord to lead His people. Leadership is not a courtesy appointment; it is one that calls for much hard, painstaking work. It will put a tax upon one's natural gifts and abilities; it will call for much more than an eight-hour day of service. Leadership, however, is a wonderful privilege, and happy will be the man who, having discharged his duties faithfully unto the Lord, hears at last from the lips of his blessed Master the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." *Matthew 25:23.BSPC 175.6*

The responsibilities of leaders in the cause are many, but a few of a general character might be listed:*BSPC 175.7*

1. Leaders Should Set Others to Work.BSPC 175.8

This aspect of the responsibility of leadership is indicated in the counsel Paul gave to the church of his day. We read:*BSPC 175.9*

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." *Ephesians 4:11, 12.BSPC 176.1*

Here the apostle shows the relationship of leadership to the perfecting of God's people. After all, the purpose of preaching, the purpose of gospel ministry, is to save men; but the saving of men means not only deliverance from sin but the perfecting of their characters for a place in God's kingdom. The apostle Paul knew this, and it was the great ideal before him in his service for God. Referring to this in one of his letters, he set before the believers this grand objective, "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (*Colossians 1:28.*) This is to be accomplished by divine grace, and to a large degree by leading the believers into fruitful channels of missionary endeavor. The text as it reads in the Authorized Version conveys the idea that the special gifts mentioned in *verse 11* are for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*BSPC 176.2*

This is true, but there is an added thought in the original text to which we do well to take heed. The thought is not so much that the gifts are “for the work of the ministry,” but for leading the believers into the work of ministering. This idea has been brought out in some of the English translations, as will be seen in the following:*BSPC 176.3*

“With a view to the fitting of the saints for the work of ministry.”
Rotherham.*BSPC 176.4*

“In order fully to equip His people for the work of serving.”
Weymouth.*BSPC 176.5*

With this thought the counsel of the Spirit of prophecy is in full accord, as will be seen in the following:*BSPC 176.6*

“There should be a well-organized plan for the employment of workers to go into all our churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor for the upbuilding of the church and also for unbelievers. It is training, education, that is needed.”—*Testimonies for the Church 9:117.BSPC 176.7*

2. They Should Be Able to Lead.*BSPC 176.8*

This has already been referred to, but let us observe this characteristic a little further. The apostle Peter speaks of “taking the oversight” (*1 Peter 5:2*), and the apostle Paul refers to him “that rules” (*Romans 12:8*). The ruling mentioned here is different from what it is in the world. The ruling in the church of God is not lording it over God’s heritage (*1 Peter 5:3*); neither is it exercising lordship over them (*Mark 10:42*). The word “rule” in the Scriptures involves much more than directing; it means to act as guide (*Hebrews 13:7*, margin); it means also to “feed” (*Psalms 28:9*; see margin). One who guides must know the way. If he does, he will be able to guide others in the way of the Lord. The true leader in the church will know also how to feed the flock of God. Never will he get behind and try to push the believers forward! He will go before them, just as did the shepherd in the days of old. He himself will point out the way, and will go forward, leading the procession. He will also provide adequate spiritual nourishment for the members of the flock. What a solemn responsibility rests upon our ministers, our

church elders, and others who minister in word and doctrine.*BSPC 176.9*

3. They Will Seek to Train Others.*BSPC 177.1*

This is one of the important aspects of the work of every leader in the church of God. In sharing his responsibility with others, especially with those of lesser experience, he will be training them for future service for the Lord.*BSPC 177.2*

“In every church there is talent, which, with the right kind of labor, might be developed to become a great help in this work. That which is needed now for the upbuilding of our churches is the nice work of wise laborers to discern and develop talent in the church talent that can be educated for the Master’s use. There should be a well-organized plan for the employment of workers to go into all our churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor for the upbuilding of the church, and also for unbelievers. It is training, education, that is needed. Those who labor in visiting the churches should give the brethren and sisters instruction in practical methods of doing missionary work.”—*Ibid.**BSPC 177.3*

Leadership means giving counsel as well as receiving counsel, it means laying plans for advance moves in the work, it means leading the people to a higher plane of Christian experience, it means also building solidly in all the work until it is done.*BSPC 177.4*

The Relationships of Leadership

An elder in a local church has many important relationships. Of necessity he sustains a vital relationship to every member of the church, but he also has relations with his fellow officers. He sustains an important relationship also to the local conference, and is responsible to them for many activities of the church of which he is elder. He sustains a relationship also to the church board, and even though he is the leading officer in the local church, he is bound by the decisions of that board. Hence the relationships are many. What obtains in the case of the local church elder obtains in principle with all leaders in the cause of God. Let us meditate briefly on some phases of this.*BSPC 178.1*

1. His Relation to the Church Members

This was forcefully expressed by the Savior in His counsel to His disciples when He said:*BSPC 178.2*

“You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister.” *Mark 10:42, 43.BSPC 178.3*

Peter expressed the same thought in his epistle when he wrote:*BSPC 178.4*

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” *1 Peter 5:2, 3.BSPC 178.5*

This is an important principle and one which is hard for many individuals to learn. Paul expressed it in another way to the church at Corinth: “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand.” *2 Corinthians 1:24.BSPC 178.6*

Again we mention that true, godly leadership does not drive; it does

not lord it over the heritage of God. One translation of the text just quoted is as follows:*BSPC 178.7*

“I do not mean that we are to dominate over you with regard to your faith, but, on the contrary, we work with you for your true happiness; indeed it is through your faith that you are standing firm.” 2 *Corinthians 1:24*, Twentieth Century.*BSPC 178.8*

2. The Relation of Church Members to the Leaders

The Lord has given counsel as to the attitude of the leaders to the members, and He has also given counsel to the church members as to their attitude to the leaders. This can be seen in several scriptures. Let us observe the following:*BSPC 178.9*

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” *Hebrews 13:7, 17.BSPC 179.1*

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” 1 *Thessalonians 5:12, 13.BSPC 179.2*

On this aspect of our church responsibilities Mrs. E. G. White has given the following excellent counsel:*BSPC 179.3*

“There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself, and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power, which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God. Those who are inclined to regard their

individual judgment as supreme, are in grave peril....*BSPC 179.4*

“To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people.”—*The Acts of the Apostles, 163, 164.BSPC 179.5*

3. The Relationship to Each Other

This means a great deal, and if proper relationships obtain, there will be harmony and love in the church of God. This will call for having confidence in one another and speaking well of one another at all times. It will mean also a sympathetic attitude, both to members of the church and to those in the community. We can learn much concerning these things from the experience of Jesus, our Lord and Master. He was in daily contact with the people, and sensed deeply their spiritual as well as their physical needs. Several times we read the expression, “He was moved with compassion.”*BSPC 179.6*

An important test in one’s Christian experience is to know how to differ with the brethren and yet love them. F. M. Wilcox several years ago gave some good counsel on this question in the Review and Herald. The following extract is from his excellent article on this subject:*BSPC 180.1*

“Is it possible to differ with our brethren and love them still? Is it possible to stand strongly and uncompromisingly for what we believe to be right, in opposition to brethren who stand just as strongly for opposing methods, and love them just as greatly as though they agreed with us? It is possible for even men of the world to do this, and surely this should be possible between brethren. How often we see this demonstrated in legislative bodies of the world. I have watched the Congress of the United States and the Parliament of Great Britain, and have seen them on opposing sides earnestly contend for what they believed to be right. They became even vehement in their discussions, but at the end of the debate I have seen these men leave the chamber, arm in arm, evincing their warm, personal friendship. On the other hand, I have seen

professed Christians become so incensed and stirred in debate that they became personal enemies. What a contrast and what a shame to the Christian profession.*BSPC 180.2*

“One test of Christianity, of the power of Christ’s grace in the heart, is to be able to differ with others earnestly but kindly, to contend for principles and not involve men in the contention. Let us always distinguish between men and principles, and even if we abhor the principles and feel that we must denounce them, let us love the men who hold the principles. In this way only can we win for Christ those with whom we associate.”—January 13, 1938.*BSPC 180.3*

Chapter 13—Objectives of the Church of Christ

The missionary charter Christ gave to His church is expressed in those memorable words recorded in Matthew's Gospel:*BSPC 181.1*

"And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." *Matthew 28:18-20.BSPC 181.2*

This divine behest to carry the message of God's redeeming grace to all the world was given at least three times after the Savior rose from the dead. The first recorded occasion was when the apostles were gathered together in the upper room, on the day that Jesus had been raised from the dead. There the Savior gave them the commission, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." *Mark 16:15.* This appears in another form and differently worded in *John 20:19-23.BSPC 181.3*

The second occasion appears to have been on the mountainside in Galilee:*BSPC 181.4*

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.... Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *Matthew 28:16-19.BSPC 181.5*

On these appearances notice the following from *The Desire of Ages:BSPC 181.6*

"The commission had been given to the twelve when Christ met with them in the upper chamber; but it was now to be given to a larger number. At the meeting on a mountain in Galilee, all the believers who could be called together were assembled. Of this meeting Christ Himself, before His death, had designated the time and place...*BSPC 181.7*

"At the time appointed, about five hundred believers were collected

in little knots on the mountain-side, eager to learn all that could be learned from those who had seen Christ since His resurrection....*BSPC 182.1*

“This was the only interview that Jesus had with many of the believers after His resurrection. He came and spoke to them saying, ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.’”—pages 818, 819.*BSPC 182.2*

The third occasion was on the Mount of Olives, when Jesus gave His parting message to His disciples. This we read in the book of Acts:*BSPC 182.3*

“You shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” *Acts 1:8.BSPC 182.4*

How many times the Savior repeated the words of this commission we do not know; there is no doubt He reminded His disciples of their sacred responsibility on many occasions. We read in *The Desire of Ages*:*BSPC 182.5*

“‘Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ Again and again the words were repeated, that the disciples might grasp their significance.”—page 818.*BSPC 182.6*

There was surely no misunderstanding the intent of the Master’s words. The gospel of divine grace, the only gospel to save sinners and prepare them for a place in the kingdom of God, is the only gospel of deliverance. There is no other.*BSPC 182.7*

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” *Acts 4:12.BSPC 182.8*

This commission was given not only to the apostles but to the entire church of God. Of course, in the first instance referred to, the responsibility was laid upon the apostles of the church, but they were the representatives of the entire church in all the world. Not only upon them, but upon every believer, is that solemn responsibility laid, to tell, to witness, to live the glorious gospel,

which alone can redeem men from the thralldom of iniquity.*BSPC*
182.9

Preaching the Gospel in All the World

This is what the commission means, not merely among the Jews but into the great Gentile world; not merely in Palestine, but in every country under heaven. National boundaries were to be overrun in the onward progress of the truth of God. Language problems will be surmounted so that every man may hear the message in his own tongue. No barrier of whatever kind will be able to stand before the victorious march of God's church as she moves forward under the direction of her great Commander. The gospel is destined to triumph, and ere long will triumph gloriously in the kingdom of our God.*BSPC 182.10*

The business of the church then is to preach this gospel of Christ. Over and over again we have this divine command. The call is for men to give this living message. Men have been endowed with the power of speech, and it is the purpose of God that by this means this blessed gospel will be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. There are variant forms of this act of telling the message. We read of "preaching" (*1 Corinthians 1:21*), publishing (*Isaiah 52:7*), "witnessing" (*Acts 26:22*), "ministering" (*Romans 15:16*), communicating (*Galatians 2:2*), and making known (*Ephesians 6:19*) the precious message of salvation to save men from sin.*BSPC 183.1*

The words used to designate the act of telling, or talking, are of wide range. Some of the original words involve the idea of proclaiming publicly, perhaps before large crowds, or before small assemblies of people. Other words indicate the thought of teaching, maybe in the home, in the church, or at the fireside. Still others convey the idea of ordinary conversation, a talk by the way, perhaps a chat over the garden wall. The thought is that the followers of Christ are to tell, to witness, wherever they may be, whether before the great assembly or walking down the street with a friend. They are to bear witness to the saving power of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ. This is evidently what the early believers did when they were persecuted and scattered from Jerusalem. We read that "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." *Acts 8:4.BSPC 183.2*

But one may ask, How could church members do this? Doubtless many of them had the gift of preaching, as we ordinarily understand this term; but think of the many sisters of the church, of the young people, and the grandfathers and the grandmothers who did not have this gift. All of them did have one gift, however, and that was the gift of speech, and here was an instance where they used it. In their enthusiasm for their new-found faith they went everywhere speaking the word of life. They did it with such power that “the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” *Acts 11:21*. This was a wonderful testimony to the truth of the living God. They preached, they conversed, they witnessed, but they also lived the truth they taught. This was a vital thing. They themselves were living epistles; the truth of God was exemplified in their hearts day by day. *BSPC 183.3*

Exalting Christ in Our Preaching

Our preaching is to be Christ centered; every truth radiates from Him. In our witness for God, Christ is to be “magnified” (*Philippians 1:20*), He is to be glorified (*1 Corinthians 6:20*), He is to be “all, and in all” (*Colossians 3:11*). The apostle Paul resolved in his ministry “not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” *1 Corinthians 2:2*. This and the preaching of the cross of Calvary were the burden of his message.*BSPC 184.1*

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” *Galatians 6:14*.*BSPC 184.2*

Well has the messenger of the Lord emphasized this vital truth:*BSPC 184.3*

“Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world....*BSPC 184.4*

“O that I could command language of sufficient force to make the impression that I wish to make upon my fellow-laborers in the gospel. My brethren, you are handling the words of life; you are dealing with minds that are capable of the highest development. Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended into the heavens, Christ coming again, should so soften, gladden, and fill the mind of the minister that he will present these truths to the people in love and deep earnestness....*BSPC 184.5*

“Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to ‘the Lamb of God.’ Lift Him up, the risen Savior, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who ‘bath loved us, and bath given Himself for us.’ Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song.”—*Gospel Workers, 156-160*.*BSPC 184.6*

The Purpose in All Our Preaching

Preaching is not merely giving information; neither is it merely to inspire a congregation. True preaching has a definite objective, and that is the saving of souls for Christ. This must never be lost sight of. In all our proclamation of the doctrines, in our interpretation of the prophecies, in our presentation of the various lines of truth peculiar to the Advent people, we must direct every message into the channel of winning souls to Christ our Lord and Master.*BSPC 184.7*

The concept of preaching and teaching in apostolic days meant bringing men and women into fellowship with Christ. The apostles were not satisfied merely with preaching or bearing their witness; they looked for and worked for results. This is seen in the use of the words “preaching” and “teaching” in several instances. Notice the words of the great commission: “Go you therefore, and teach all nations.” The marginal rendering and the rendering given by most of the translations, is to “make disciples, or, Christians, of all nations.” The apostles preached, but they preached with a definite objective; they preached to win men to God, and by divine help they won men and women to Christ Jesus. We see another instance in the book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas had been laboring in Derbe, and the Scriptures mention that they “preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many.” *Acts 14:21*. But the marginal reading is “had made many disciples.” This was the apostolic objective, and it should be our objective in the work today.*BSPC 185.1*

“Our greatest burden should be ... the salvation of souls.”—*Testimonies for the Church 9:85.BSPC 185.2*

“The conversion of souls to God is the greatest, the noblest work in which human beings can have a part.”—*Testimonies for the Church 7:52.BSPC 185.3*

Caring for the Souls Won to the Truth

When souls are won to Christ they leave the ranks of the kingdom of darkness and they enter the fellowship of the saints in light. They turn their backs on the things of the world, and they now face toward the kingdom of heaven. For all such who depart from the evils of this sinful world, God has provided a home. That home is the church. The Lord calls it “the household of faith” (*Galatians 6:10*), and all the members are recognized as “sons and daughters” of the Most High (*2 Corinthians 6:18*). The church of God on earth is also a refuge, a fortress; it is a haven of rest for all who are weary and who need the comfort and solace of divine grace. The church as a home is a place where all can find the joy of family relationship, where all are brothers and sisters, with the great God as their heavenly Father. For all, this home provides divine security, daily nourishment, and family affection.*BSPC 185.4*

Family life in the providence of God brings great comfort and joy to each of its members. So it should be in the church of Christ. What wonderful words of consolation God has given through His servants the prophets. We read:*BSPC 186.1*

“Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” *Isaiah 40 1, 2.BSPC 186.2*

It is the plan of God that His people find comfort in fellowship and in communion one with the other. We are to enjoy communion with Him and also know communion with the saints. “The word ‘fellowship’ means participation, partnership.”—*Gospel Workers, 392.BSPC 186.3*

Such fellowship we are to experience with God (*1 John 1:3*), with Christ (*1 Corinthians 1:9*), with the Holy Spirit (*Philippians 2:1*), with the gospel (*Philippians 1:5*), with the saints (*1 John 1:7*), and with the sufferings of Christ (*Philippians 3:10*). What a prospect is held out before us as we enjoy communion with Jesus. Note the following encouraging words:*BSPC 186.4*

“Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark

world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.”—*The Desire of Ages*, 21.*BSPC 186.5*

The church is the place where God’s children learn to live together in Christian fellowship; it is there that the grand rehearsal is enacted for living together in heaven. Many will be the lessons to be learned; many will be the experiences we shall be called to endure. If we are faithful, however, and kind and sympathetic in our dealings one with the other, our characters will be perfected, and we shall be made ready for the everlasting kingdom of our God. We may take comfort as we look upon the restless waves dashing their spray upon the seashore. There we see the pebbles on the beach with the waves constantly grinding them one against the other. This grinding process results in smoothing them until they are well rounded. This aptly illustrates the experience that comes to us in our church life, and how, as a result, God plans to round out our characters and fit them to live with Him forever.*BSPC 186.6*

Missionary Service Through the Church

The work of the church in its efforts to bring the message of salvation to lost men is twofold. According to the Savior's commission, it is to "make" disciples; it is also to keep disciples. It is to seek for believers; it is also to shepherd believers. It is to win men to Christ; it is then to build men up in Christ Jesus the Lord. The one is vital; so also is the other. This was stressed clearly in the language of the Master Himself when He said:*BSPC 187.1*

"Go you therefore, and teach ["make disciples," margin] all nations. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." *Matthew 28:19, 20.BSPC 187.2*

The work of salvation is a beautiful whole. On the one hand, it means gathering men and women from the world of sin; on the other, it means nurturing and instructing them in the principles of the kingdom of God.*BSPC 187.3*

The Responsibility of Every Member

The commission of the Savior was meant for every soul naming the name of Jesus.*BSPC 187.4*

“The Savior’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time.” *The Desire of Ages*, 822.*BSPC 187.5*

This is not at all surprising, for the Master gave to every man his work. This was emphasized in His ministry on several occasions. Matthew records in the parable of the talents that Jesus gave it “to every man according to his several ability” (*Matthew 25:15*). Mark’s record reads that Christ gave “to every man his work” (*Mark 13:34*). Luke refers to the final reckoning and tells how the Lord would look to see “how much every man had gained by trading” (*Luke 19:15*). Hence no one is left out; every disciple of Christ Jesus is called into service. That responsibility and that privilege are the lot of every member of the church of Christ.*BSPC 187.6*

In the apostolic days those who accepted the gospel of salvation were enthusiastic missionaries of the cross. The time came when persecution arose in Jerusalem and resulted in a great scattering of the early believers. But the apostles were not driven out. The leaders of the Jewish church saw to it that they were confined to the Holy City. In scattering the believers, the Pharisees naturally hoped that, being without their shepherds, they would soon grow weary and give up the faith. In this they sadly miscalculated. For these believers, once driven out of Jerusalem, awoke to the wonderful opportunities before them. We do not read of their complaining or mourning over their losses, the loss of their homes or their businesses. No! They “went every where preaching the word.” *Acts 8:4*. Think of it. There were no apostles among them; there were no ordained ministers. These were the lay members of the church who had been banished from their homes. These members became real missionaries, for wherever they went they told the glad tidings. Their word was certainly not without results, for a little later in Luke’s record we read of what was accomplished through their ministry. “And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” *Acts 11:21.BSPC*

187.7

Mrs. E. G. White comments on this experience as follows:*BSPC*
188.1

“When they were scattered by persecution, they went forth filled with missionary zeal. They realized the responsibility of their mission. They knew that they held in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world; and they were constrained by the love of Christ to break this bread to all who were in need. The Lord wrought through them. Wherever they went, the sick were healed, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, 106.*BSPC* 188.2

Figures Illustrative of Soul-winning Work

Quite a number of figures are mentioned in the Holy Scriptures illustrative of the work of winning men and women to God. The winner of souls is likened:*BSPC 188.3*

1. To a Fisherman

Jesus taught this lesson quite strikingly to His disciples. We are all acquainted with the story of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, and how, at the command of their Lord, the disciples thrust out from the land. We know how they toiled all night long and caught nothing. We know also how, at the behest of Jesus, discouraged as they were, they let down their nets once again. This time they “enclosed a great multitude of fishes,” so much so that their net broke. (*Luke 5:6*.)*BSPC 188.4*

Then followed the dismay of the disciples; they were astonished, yes, they were even humbled in heart. Peter, quickly responding, fell down at the feet of Jesus, saying, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” But the Master said, “Fear not, from henceforth thou shall catch men.” *Verses 8, 10*. Here, then, is the lesson. Both ministers and laymen are likened to fishermen, casting forth the net; and the promise of the Savior is that we shall catch men. Jesus repeated this lesson just before His ascension. Again they were by the seaside. Again the Savior bade them cast forth their nets. Again they had results from their efforts, and what results! The record reads, “They were not able to draw it [the net] for the multitude of fishes.” *John 21:6*. When the net was finally brought to land and they counted the catch, it was found that this time they had caught “great fishes.” These were not the small herrings they had caught before; these were large fishes. The lesson doubtless is that in our ministry for God the gospel net will bring in those from the high places of earth as well as those from the lower walks of life. To all men the call is to be given, and from all levels of society men and women will come to drink of the water of life freely.*BSPC 188.5*

2. To a Hunter

This figure is used in Jeremiah, where Jehovah refers to both

fishermen and hunters in connection with His work.*BSPC 189.1*

“Behold, I will send for many fishers, says the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” *Jeremiah 16:16.BSPC 189.2*

Here are men likened to “hunters,” men who go to the difficult places of earth, sometimes to places sparsely inhabited, away off in the solitary areas of this old world to find the souls for whom Christ died. How like the work of the faithful colporteur.*BSPC 189.3*

3. To a Light Bearer

The Lord has also likened His servants to light bearers. “You are the light of the world,” were the words of our Savior. *Matthew 5:14*. The apostle Paul caught the thought also and passed it on to the believers in his day when he said, “You shine as lights in the world.” *Philippians 2:15*. This is God’s purpose for His church. They are to shine as lights amid the darkness of this world of sin; they are to hold aloft the lamp of light and seek to lead men and women to Jesus, the Light of the world.*BSPC 189.4*

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God.... There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”*Testimonies for the Church 9:19.BSPC 190.1*

Working for souls brings blessings, unspeakable blessings, not only to those who are won for God and who rejoice in Christ as their Savior, but also to our own hearts.*BSPC 190.2*

Our Financial Responsibility

Another of the privileges of church membership is the support of the work of God. This involves contributions, some of which are obligatory and some voluntary. The Bible terms these two aspects of worship in giving as “tithes and offerings.” The payment of tithes is a direct command of the Lord. It was so with Israel of old; it is so with the Israel of God today. The tithing principle antedates the Levitical priestly service; before ever there was a Jew the tithing principle was recognized by the patriarchs. This was so with Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchizedek (*Genesis 14:18-20*); it was so also with Jacob, as we read in *Genesis 28:22*. An interesting and illuminating feature of this subject is that the Melchizedek priesthood is infinitely older than the Levitical. Our blessed Lord is a priest, but not after the order of Aaron; He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The Levitical priesthood was temporary; men could not “continue by reason of death” (*Hebrews 7:23*); the Melchizedek priesthood is an order that has “the power of an endless life” (*verse 16*); Melchizedek was “made like unto the Son of God,” and “abides a priest continually” (*verse 3*). The Greek word rendered “continually” is rendered “for ever” in *Hebrews 10:12, 14*. Today we live not under the Levitical priesthood; that is gone; it was part of what was abolished at the cross of Calvary. We live, thank God, under the Melchizedek priesthood, with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the great high priest. Christ the Lord as our Melchizedek in the sanctuary in heaven “continues ever” (*Hebrews 7:24*); of Him “it is witnessed that he lives” (*verse 8*), and lives forevermore.*BSPC 190.3*

As the tithing principle was practiced under the Melchizedek priesthood in bygone days, so it is part of our privilege and responsibility today. With Jesus as our great high priest over the household of God, we bring our tithes to Him. This is no burden, for in our new relationship to Him we love Him and experience joy and gladness that comes in the payment of our tithes.*BSPC 190.4*

The bringing in of both tithes and offerings is also an act of worship; it is just as much an act of worship as the singing of songs of praise or the bringing of our petitions to the throne of grace. When we worship the Lord with our gifts or offerings, we bring to Him an

expression of our love and devotion. Our offerings are our gifts; our tithes are not gifts; they are already His, for He claims them as His own. "The tithe is the Lord's." After we have rendered to the Lord His own, we are then privileged to bring what might be called our own out of the nine tenths that remain. It is from this portion that we make our gifts. Here is a real test of our love and consecration to the Lord.*BSPC 191.1*

We are counseled by the apostle Paul to give as the Lord has prospered us. (*1 Corinthians 16:2*.) It seems that although this matter is left with each one individually, we are nevertheless to bring to the Lord an adequate proportion of our earnings. Liberality in our giving is something very pleasing to the Lord.*BSPC 191.2*

Giving to the cause of God, and especially to the work in mission lands, reacts in rich and abundant blessings to our own hearts. Many years ago C. H. Spurgeon remarked, "Your love has a broken wing if it cannot cross the ocean." Chalmers, the great missionary, once said, "Missionary giving affects the home church, not so much by exhaustion as by fermentation."*BSPC 191.3*

When the minister for God makes an appeal for offerings or for faithfulness in the payment of tithes, let us not murmur or complain. Remember, he is but doing his duty as a faithful shepherd of the flock. The shepherd in the days of old not only led the flock, not only safeguarded their interests, not only fed them, but also sheared the sheep. This was just as necessary for their comfort as it was that he feed them. Might this not represent one phase of the work of the minister of God.*BSPC 191.4*

Necessity for Concerted Action

It is God's longing desire for His people that they present a united front to the enemy of our souls. There must be no division in the ranks of God's people; otherwise they run the risk of defeat in the conflict. All must move forward, and move forward together. *BSPC 191.5*

Such a victorious advance of the forces of righteousness calls for a deep and earnest consecration on the part of every member of the church of God. If ever there was a time when the church should be given over to God's work, that time is now. The end is near, and we must be prepared for the final crisis; it is near, and hastens greatly. Indifference, worldliness, and lethargy must be put aside, and a fervent love and sincere devotion must take their place. We must be all out for God. There can be no halfway measures in this struggle; it will call for all we have. When the members of the church make this entire surrender and yield themselves to the divine will, God will do exploits through His people. It is ours to "consecrate"; it is God's to "sanctify." The call in the days of old was, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" *1 Chronicles 29:5.BSPC 192.1*

What shall be our response? Shall we, like Isaiah, reply, "Here am I; send me"? (*Isaiah 6:8.*) God grant it may be so. *BSPC 192.2*

God has provided full spiritual equipment for Christian living and for active service. When Aaron and his sons were anointed for the priesthood in the old tabernacle days, there was a beautiful significance to the ritual. This, with other Old Testament incidents, has been recorded for our benefit, and we do well to take heed to the solemn lessons brought to our hearts. When Aaron was anointed, the blood was applied to his ear, his hand, and his foot. The right ear was to be anointed, so was the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot. One may wonder why this detail of information, but does it not bring home to us, that as we serve our heavenly Father we are to hear His voice and to keep our ears open for that voice of counsel continually? Does it not mean that now our hands are to labor in His service, and in His alone? Does it not convey the thought that now, like Enoch of old, we are

to walk with our God? With ears, with hands, and with feet given over to God, there is no limit to what God can accomplish through human instrumentality.*BSPC 192.3*

“There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”—*Testimonies for the Church 8:19.BSPC 192.4*

